

Papitto Opportunity Connection

July 2022

Celebrating Communities of Color

Mark Your Calendar. The second annual WaterFire to celebrate Rhode Island's communities of color will be held on Saturday, August 13, 2022 and it will be bigger and better than ever before!



The annual event, which is sponsored by the Papitto Opportunity Connection, kicks off at 6 p.m. and includes dozens of exciting performances on multiple stages in downtown Providence.

Enjoy Bollywood and Bhangra at the WaterFire Basin Stage, along with an interactive dance lesson. The POC Music Stage, located on Steeple Street, will feature performances from renowned vocalist, steel pan musician and two-time New England Urban Music Award winner Becky Bass Band as well as master percussionist Sidy Maïga and his band The Bridge Where We Meet. Enjoy Salsa music from Robertico Arias y Su Alebreke.

The evening's celebration will also include a POC Community Village highlighting dozens of POC-funded organizations that will share information about critical programs and opportunities for communities of color in Rhode Island.

Follow us on our social media (links below) for continuous updates on artists and performances. See you there!

Fresh Food Continues to Sprout in RI's Urban Neighborhoods

If you live in an urban community, instead of a grocery store or farmer's market, you are

likely to only have access corner marts and dollar stores, making it much easier to grab a bag of chips or candy bar than a juicy fresh picked peach or a handful of grapes.

Food deserts —areas where low-income people don't have easy access to grocery stores that offer fresh food, are abundant. Access to low-cost healthy food and fresh produce is often limited in communities of color across the country. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), more than 51 million people live in food deserts in urban communities across the country.

In Rhode Island, Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT) is working to change the narrative. SCLT, which established the first community garden in Providence's urban core 40 years ago now supports roughly 60 community gardens and manages five production farms in Providence, Central Falls and Pawtucket. According to SCLT, more than 5,000 Rhode Islanders are now eating from SCLT community gardens, meal after meal, year after year. At least 95 percent of the program's beneficiaries, who enjoy fresh picked produce and healthy food, are people of color.



Pictured from left to right: Mary Worrell, SCLT; Peter Marino, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI; Hilary Fagan, Rhode Island Commerce; Jazandra Barros, SCLT; Margaret DeVos, SCLT; Carol Ventura, RI Housing; Mike Isenberg, SCLT; Rochelle Lee, SCLT; Michelle Lederberg, BCBS-RI; US Senator Jack Reed; Darrèll Brown, RI Conservation Law Foundation; and Jorge Elorza, Providence Mayor. Photo by Shana Santow, SCLT.

In the midst of growing season, SCLT recently opened a new healthy food hub in Upper South Providence designed to address food insecurity in the neighborhood. SCLT unveiled 404 Broad Street —a 12,000 square foot healthy food hub that will offer healthy and fresh produce to urban neighborhoods. The hub will include two restaurants, a small grocer, and a farm-to-market center, where 50 local farmers can bring their produce and allow SCLT to expand its efforts to provide an equitable and healthy food system in urban neighborhoods.

The Papitto Opportunity Connection recently partnered with SCLT and its efforts to combat food insecurity and build equitable local food systems in urban communities across the state. POC's recent support has allowed SCLT to invest in several areas including its youth programs, which focus on showing young people that food growing is a basic and necessary life skill and that work in the food system is a viable life path.

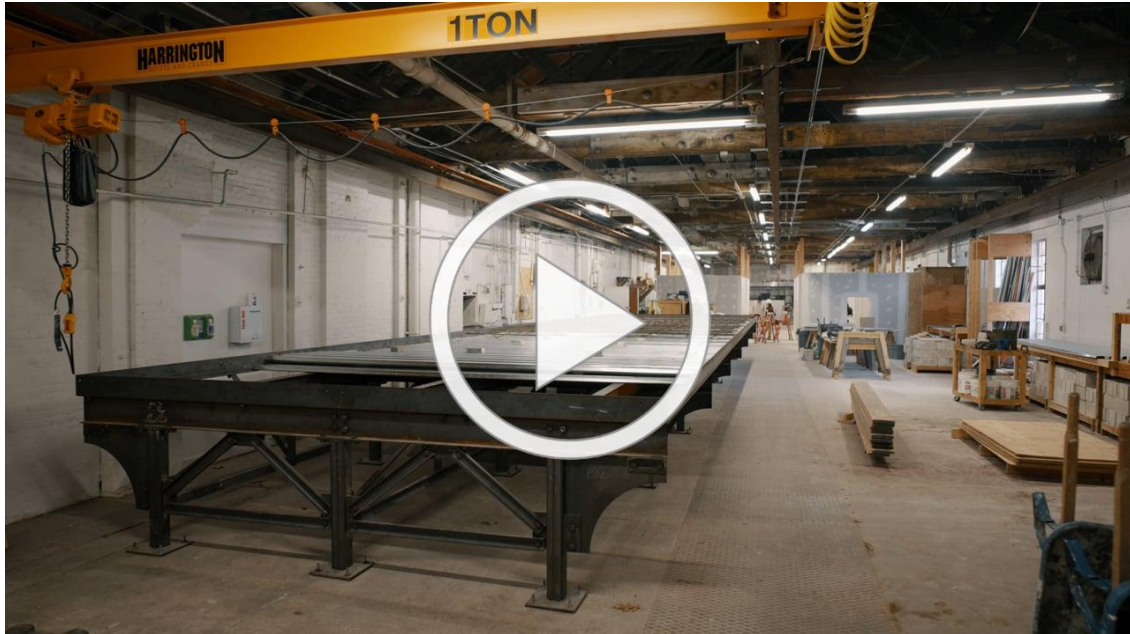
With the support from POC, SCLT is now able to increase the capacity of its youth programs and build out a dedicated space specifically to meet the growing interest in food

and food systems and where its youth can delve deeper into their learning experiences. The POC investment ensures that into the foreseeable future young people in the community have opportunities to explore the world of urban and (non-urban) agriculture and sustainable food systems.

Building Better Futures

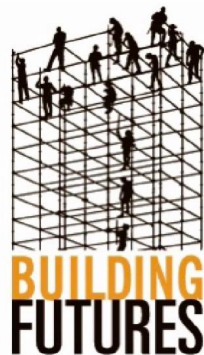
For too long the power to earn family-sustaining wages in a meaningful and rewarding career has been predominantly available to people who can afford exclusive post-secondary education. This resulted in too many of Rhode Island's BIPOC individuals left behind.

Building Futures works to change that narrative by creating opportunity through registered apprenticeship for low-income Rhode Islanders, including the BIPOC community.



Building Futures uses multiple strategies to make a powerful impact on communities of color across Rhode Island. The Providence-based non-profit organization works with employers to design and develop new Registered Apprenticeship programs in Rhode Island's fastest growing industries.

Building Futures also runs a nationally recognized construction pre-apprenticeship program that connects low-income adults to careers in construction. They bring it all together with systems change work to ensure that Registered Apprenticeship, a proven workforce development model, expands equity while delivering for employers and Rhode Islanders.



“Registered Apprenticeship is post-secondary education —and unlike a university degree, it is an earn while you learn opportunity with guaranteed career advancement. Whether

we are supporting the graduates of our pre-apprenticeship training in launching lucrative careers in building and construction, or we are working with private employers to design and register apprenticeship programs that can exceed diversity, equity, and inclusion recruitment and retention goals, we are creating opportunities that transform lives and communities,” said Andrew Cortés, Building Futures Executive Director and Papitto Opportunity Connection Advisory Board Member

Building Futures has made a significant impact in Rhode Island’s BIPOC community. Overall, 1800 BIPOC community members in Rhode Island have launched new careers in good paying jobs in 40 industries and occupations including construction, healthcare, information technology, green and agriculture/plant-based industries, fisheries & marine trades, advanced manufacturing, and many others.

With the support of the Papitto Opportunity Connection, Building Futures can continue to enhance their programs and change lives.

“POC’s investment will significantly expand our work and is a remarkable commitment to creating and expanding economic opportunity in Rhode Island’s BIPOC communities,” said Cortés. “We are honored to join with other POC grantees since we know that no single organization or individual can single handedly undo centuries of structural inequality. It is going to take the harnessed power of organizations and individuals working intentionally together, strengthening Building Futures’ efforts in concert with POC’s powerful strategy to collectively move towards justice.”

Here to Listen. Here to Help.

Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) is a non-profit private foundation dedicated to listening and working together with Rhode Island’s communities of color to empower and create success stories by investing in **education, job skills training and entrepreneurial ventures.**

Since being established just 18 months ago, POC has invested in more than 120 non-profit organizations that provide crucial services to uplift Rhode Island’s communities of color.



Twice a year, June 1-15 and December 1-15, POC accepts programmatic grant proposals for consideration from recognized non-profit 501(c)3 organizations in Rhode Island focusing on creating success stories for communities of color in the areas of education, job skills training and entrepreneurship.

For more info, visit, pocfoundation.com

