

Papitto Opportunity Connection

December 2022

Dear Friends,

December 2022 marks the two-year anniversary of the founding of Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC), a private foundation dedicated to listening, building, and strengthening opportunities for Rhode Island's communities of color.

In our early days, we began by thoughtfully creating a foundation board entirely comprised of community members of color and representative of Indigenous, Latino, African American, Southeast Asian and South Asian backgrounds.

Below: Conexión Latina Newport community conversation



We slowly connected with leaders from across the state, having conversations in communities from Conexión Latina Newport to African Heritage conversations in Providence and Pawtucket to meetings at the Center for Southeast Asians and a gathering with Indigenous community members in Charlestown.

Below: Community leaders conversation at Community Libraries of Providence, Knight Memorial Library



We learned so much in talking with people, hearing their stories and learning about their culture and understanding their challenges. One community member shared, “Progress moves at the speed of trust” and we took that to heart. We recognized early on that it was important to build trust in each community, and every day. I am hopeful we have done that.

In having community conversations, we understood that Rhode Island’s communities of color struggle to launch and grow a small business; that organizations serving these communities are in a perpetual state of emergency; and we realized because they are working so hard, they rarely have the chance to connect with each other and learn how they might work together.

Below: College Visions graduates, left; Indigenous Empowerment Center, right



These community conversations directly impacted POC’s direction and fundamental purpose in creating opportunities for communities of color with a particular focus on non-traditional programs focused on education, job skills training and entrepreneurship.

Below: POC at WaterFire, left; RI Philharmonic Music School students, right



Throughout the last two years we have supported more than 150 RI non-profit organizations. We have committed \$60 million to non-profits, which in turn goes back into

the state's economy.

Below: 2022 Transform Rhode Island Scholarship winners



Together with leaders in RI's communities of color, we have created small business loan programs, expanded financial literacy offerings, grown mentorship programs for young and older people, enhanced support systems for higher education for first generation college students, established the Transform RI Scholarship Program, created high paying job opportunities in the medical field, invested in music and art education, swimming lessons and golf instruction for youngsters in urban core cities, and fostered opportunities for food entrepreneurs of color to name a few.

Below: Swim lessons and golf instructions for RI youth



We held our first annual POC Connector Conference, bringing together more than 120 non-profit entities to collaborate and share. And this past summer, more than 65,000 people celebrated Rhode Island's beautifully diverse community of artists, performers, food vendors and non-profit organizations during the POC at WaterFire event.

Below: 2022 POC Connector Conference at Pawtucket Armory



We have been intentional with our actions and we are forever grateful to the countless non-profit organizations that are working to create real change and cultivate opportunities for the future.

Below: Bollywood family dancing at POC at WaterFire event



In this season of giving, I want to share this thought: POC commits 100% of its funding grants to organizations serving people of color in RI. We do so to provide real-world opportunities that will lead not only to present day success, but also to equitable generational change.

I encourage you to find a cause that you feel connected to and give of yourself. You can perform an act of kindness, give nourishment, give blood, donate generously to a non-profit organization, distribute essentials to people experiencing homelessness, adopt a family, or simply share a kind word with a friend or neighbor.

Below: Food distribution in partnership with Center for Southeast Asians



We all have the ability to make an impact and create positive change in our community. I wish you all a happy, healthy holiday season and a prosperous 2023. I can't wait to see what great work Papitto Opportunity Connection and our community partners continue to do in the coming year.

Warm holiday wishes,

Barbara