

Papitto Opportunity Connection

April 2025

Papitto Opportunity Connection Awards \$4.3 Million In Grants

Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) has awarded more than \$4.3 million in grants to non-profit organizations across the state working with Rhode Island's communities most in need as a result of its December 2024 grant application period. The awards include a \$1-Million Innovation Challenge Grant given to The Clinic at [Amos House](#), as well as operational funding provided to 136 other non-profit organizations.

Images below courtesy of Amos House



“Today, the critical work of non-profits committed to driving systemic change for communities most in need is under attack,” said John A. Tarantino, POC Managing Trustee. “As we have since our founding in 2020, POC remains committed to making investments to organizations that make connections, eliminate barriers to success, and clear pathways to learning.”



The POC Million Dollar Innovation Challenge supports programming that is designed to create systemic change for communities most in need in the areas of education, skills training, entrepreneurship, healthcare or housing. Non-profits are encouraged to collaborate on proposals to leverage resources and cultivate partnerships. POC's Small Grant Program has provided operational funding to more than 350 Rhode Island-based 501(c)3 organizations with demonstrated needs of varying sizes.

Applications for both grants, which will be awarded through a competitive RFP process, will be accepted June 1-15 and December 1-15 via an online application portal. All organizations applying for a grant must submit an online application to be considered– this applies to first time grants, and those organizations seeking additional funding.

To learn more, click [here](#).

Exciting Update On The 2025 Transform RI Scholarship!

The [Transform Rhode Island Scholarship](#) (TRIS) application portal officially closed at 11:59 PM on April 7. We're thrilled to share that we received a record-breaking 637 entries from 64 public, private, and charter schools across Rhode Island!

What's Next in the Selection Process?

- TRIS applications are currently being reviewed by a team of distinguished judges who will select 10 finalists.
- The Top 10 Finalists will be announced in mid-May.



Pictured above: 2024 TRIS winners

Who Will Transform RI in 2025?

- The Top 10 Finalists will be invited to the 2025 Transform RI Scholarship celebration on May 28th. That evening, the winning student will be announced, receive a \$1 million investment from Papitto Opportunity Connection to bring that student's idea to life and receive a \$25,000 scholarship. In addition, that evening, nine other finalists will each receive scholarships ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

Follow [@transformRI](#) on Instagram for updates.

Community Angels Marks Milestone With Increased Impact And Engagement

The commitment to improve the lives of children in Rhode Island carries a profound responsibility for [Community Angels](#) Executive Director Carol Aguasvivas. The decorated veteran is described by her team as “a quiet leader who diligently works behind the scenes, managing all essential duties.” Aguasvivas carries on her mother’s legacy. The family’s matriarch founded Community Angels in 2009.



Images courtesy of Community Angels

This year, POC support has allowed the organization to serve more than 3,000 children and youth, increase its volunteer base by 30% and strengthen community relations. Successful initiatives that led to the donation of early literacy materials to local daycares, the organization of Rhode Island’s largest toy and coat drive, and the implementation of youth leadership and exchange programs.



“The funding received has been instrumental in expanding our impact, allowing us to provide direct services, essential items, and critical referrals to families in need,” Aguasvivas said. “Through continued partnerships, we are committed to creating a more connected, informed, and supported community.”

To learn more about Community Angels or to sign up and become a volunteer, click [here](#).

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council Celebrates Earth Day

In honor of Earth Day, the [Woonasquatucket River Greenway](#) in Johnston recently transformed into a buzzing, blooming celebration of environmental action and community spirit. On a sun-filled early spring day more than 150 committed volunteers showed up strong and the Earth Day Celebration and Volunteer Clean Day was incredible!



Images courtesy of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

The volunteers came together, rolled up their sleeves and worked to beautify and create real change on the Greenway. They planted, painted, mulched, cleared invasive species, picked up litter, and brought joy and color to the Greenway—from Hillside Avenue to Manton Pond.

“The collective impact was massive, and we’re still riding high on the energy, laughter, and music that filled the day,” said Jill Davidson, Director of Development and Communications, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.



This was a team effort for the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC). From Bike Camp and Community Action to Environmental Education and River Rangers programs— everyone worked tirelessly to fulfill the WRWC goal to restore not only the Woonasquatucket River but the communities it touches.

“We want to extend our sincerest thanks to staff, volunteers, and our generous sponsors who made this event not only possible but extraordinary,” said Davidson. “The tremendous support and belief in our mission helps make our vision a reality.”

CHOP: A Recipe For Opportunity And Community Impact

Since its grand opening last October, the [Culinary Hub of Providence](#) (CHOP) has garnered enthusiastic praise, and for good reason. This innovative restaurant is more than just a dining destination; it's a vital component of the [Genesis Center's](#) comprehensive job training program, an initiative that empowers individuals through language education, essential support services, and robust workforce development.

The Genesis Center's Culinary Arts training program, made possible in part by a grant from POC, is an intensive 8-week curriculum meticulously crafted around the [American Culinary Federation](#) standards.



Images courtesy of the Culinary Hub of Providence (CHOP)

Aspiring culinary professionals gain hands-on expertise in critical areas such as food service sanitation and safety, nutrition principles, diverse food preparation techniques, masterful knife skills, the art of cold food production and presentation, polished dining, room service, strategic menu planning, precise units of measurement, and the mathematical acumen required for menu costing and recipe scaling.



Shannon Carroll, the President and CEO of the Genesis Center, underscores the pivotal role of organizations like POC in bringing impactful programs to life. "We are deeply grateful to funders like POC for their invaluable support, which has been instrumental in the realization of CHOP. This venture allows us to significantly elevate our culinary training by providing trainees with essential hands-on experience encompassing both the back-of-house and front-of-house operations. As they embark on their careers within the restaurant industry, CHOP also functions as a revenue-generating social enterprise, ensuring that proceeds are reinvested directly back into our training program."

During their training, students benefit from invaluable time spent within the vibrant atmosphere of the Culinary Hub of Providence (CHOP). Furthermore, post-graduation opportunities abound, with potential employment at CHOP as either a valued standard employee or through participation in a dynamic multi-employer apprenticeship program.



CHOP serves as a powerful engine for "learn-and-earn" workforce development, effectively creating accessible pathways to livable wage careers within Rhode Island's high-demand hospitality sector for low-to-moderate income residents. By equipping prospective employees with employer-driven curricula, CHOP also plays a crucial role in bolstering the state's vital culinary landscape by supplying local enterprises with well-trained talent.

Integral to all Genesis Center programming is a strong foundation of supportive services. Through barrier identification and management, financial education and services, comprehensive wrap-around support, adult education, technology education and access, and hands-on learning and earning opportunities. Genesis Culinary participants gain direct pathways to upward mobility, breaking the cycle of generational paycheck-to-paycheck living.

Stop drooling and make a reservation [here](#).

Keeping To The Family's Mission And Values

This past week, NBC-10's Dan Jaehnig sat down with POC Founder and Trustee Barbara Papitto to learn about her, POC, and the work she does in the community that you might not know about. As you will learn, Barbara is driven to help people based on values instilled in her by family and from lessons learned over a lifetime.

Turning grief into generosity, philanthropist donates over \$100M to non-profits

by DAN JAEHNIG, NBC 10 NEWS | Wed, April 23rd 2025 at 7:00 PM
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Barbara Papitto spoke with NBC 10's Dan Jaehnig. (WJAR)

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We thank [WJAR-NBC10](#) for capturing Barbara's essence, generosity, and dedication.

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