

Papitto Opportunity Connection

August 2025

Essential Tips, Advice & Key Information For Nonprofits



Each month, we'll share essential tips, expert advice, and valuable information aimed to support POC-funded nonprofit organizations to grow, thrive, and continue to create a big impact in our mighty state.

How To Raise Money In A Volatile Climate

Nonprofit organizations here in Rhode Island and across America are facing uncertainty as we approach the last part of 2025. Actions impacting current and future federal grants as well as a downturn in the economy are contributing to that sense of uncertainty. For most nonprofits, securing grants from a variety of sources is their lifeblood, yet often grant writing takes a back seat to day-to-day operations for many organizations.

To help Rhode Island nonprofits understand the basics about grant writing, the [Alliance for Non-Profit Impact](#) will be hosting a Grant Writing Cohort in September and October designed to help. The four-session training course “will cover key aspects from introducing your organizations to funders to preparing for submission.” Held on September 10, 17, 24 and October 1 from 4:30pm to 6:30pm, the Alliance notes attendees will complete the program “equipped with the skills to craft compelling proposals.”

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

Additionally, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* recently published articles offering [tips for writing and winning six figure grants in a competitive climate](#) as well as [six proven ways to capture grants to increase capacity](#).

Ready To Roll!

As the summer winds down, many POC grantees have been hard at work helping prepare families for an exciting return to the classroom. For 29-year-old Cranston native, [four-time Olympic gold medalist and two-time World Champion, Gazmine “GG” Mason](#), gearing up for back-to-school season means connecting with community through organizing a Bowl-a-Rama event for 100 families at East Providence Lanes.

“I started the Gazmine Foundation with my parents to foster education, health and nutrition for under resourced kids through the sport of bowling,” said Gazmine. “It’s a fun way to get them excited for the upcoming school year. It’s a cool way to introduce the kids to the sport.”

[The 3rd Annual Roll Back to School Saturday](#) was held August 2 and saw its biggest turnout to date. Open to children 6-18, the event provides school supplies, bowling, food, and college saving resources —at no cost to families.



Pictured above: More than 100 youth participated in the Gazmine Foundation Back to School bowling event. Pictured below: 4x Olympic gold medalist and 2x world champ Gazmine Mason (center with headband) with youth at her back to school bowling event.

Gazmine also took the opportunity to share her personal story of how she earned a full athletic scholarship to the University of Nebraska—highlighting lesser-known pathways to higher education.

"I got a full ride to the University of Nebraska through bowling," said Gazmine. "I'm a professional bowler and four-time gold medalist. It's allowed me to travel the world, compete for Team USA, and open doors for me in ways I never knew would even happen. I hope to help others in their bowling careers and introduce them to the sport."

Driven by a belief that bowling and other non-traditional sports deserve more recognition; GG has become a global ambassador for the sport. To further this mission, she launched her own company, [Got Game, LLC](#). Beyond her impressive athletic and entrepreneurial achievements, she is a dedicated advocate for non-traditional sports and the athletes who compete in them.

Later this month, join [GG](#) at her next fundraiser to benefit the [Gazmine Foundation](#).



Higher Ground International Opens New Headquarters

RUKIYA: She rises high!

Henrietta White Holder has not only risen but she has also soared.

She is the founder of [Higher Ground International](#), (HGI) a nonprofit that provides critical services to West African immigrants, refugees and other communities in need of support in Rhode Island. HGI offers a myriad of programs and services, including the Sweetie Care African Elders enrichment program, culturally appropriate food distributions, immigration assistance, case management services, financial literacy, housing assistance, clothing, workforce inclusion, hot meals and much more.

Henrietta, who immigrated from Liberia to escape their Civil War, founded HGI in 2008 with \$1,000. She has battled Covid-19 and cancer, but nothing has stopped her from supporting those in her community who need it the most. She champions inclusion, dignity and pride, and 17 years after founding HGI she has provided support services to more than 60,000 immigrants, refugees and others in need in Rhode Island.



Pictured from left to right: Higher Ground International's Henrietta White Holder with POC founder Barbara Papitto.

This summer, HGI's new headquarters—The RUKIYA CENTER—opened its doors to the community. Located in Providence's West End, the newly renovated building replaces HGI's previous space on Peace Street.

“People said, ‘You are living your dream.’ I didn’t dream about this. I saw people suffering. I saw people’s dignity being taken away. I was called to do this. I couldn’t watch people suffer,” said Henrietta.

POC is proud to support HGI and its critical work to uplift those who need it most in Rhode Island.

“What Henrietta does here, is supporting community. That is first in our hearts and is in Henrietta’s heart as well,” said POC Founder Barbara Papitto.

At the official ribbon cutting of the RUKIYA Center — on a sweltering hot summer day— Henrietta stood amongst elected officials, community leaders, members of the African community, family and friends and addressed the large crowd.

Behind her was a building freshly painted in bright colors, ready to welcome its first visitors.

Henrietta was beaming.

“Today we are opening the doors to hope,” she said.

Mentors Sought To Join Little Brotherhood

One in three young people will grow up without a mentor.

[Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rhode Island](#) (BBBSRI) is working to reduce that statistic. But the Providence-based non-profit organization that provides mentors to boys and girls across the state, needs help.

The overall waiting list of boys seeking mentors is long. There are currently 250 Little Brothers in Rhode Island who are patiently and eagerly waiting to be partnered with a male mentor.



Images provided by BBBSRI. Pictured above: Little Brotherhood orientation.

To address the critical shortage of male mentors, BBBSRI recently launched The Little Brotherhood (LBH), a group mentoring program for men and boys ages 8-12. Each monthly two-hour session brings together boys on BBBSRI waitlist with caring adult mentors to explore their strengths, grow social-emotional skills, and feel a sense of belonging. Boys will connect with peers and mentors in a safe space and hear from guest facilitators on topics like non-violence, communication, and making good choices. Mentors can join one session at a time—just show up, be present, and to help create a space where boys can thrive.

“The need is significant, and programs like LBH help us fill the gap by providing meaningful experiences while boys wait to be matched one-to-one,” said Kaleigh Perkins, Chief Operating Officer, BBBSRI.

Big Brothers Big Sisters
OF RHODE ISLAND

THE LITTLE BROTHERHOOD

FREE MENTORING PROGRAM

FOR MALE MENTORS 19+

MEETS EVERY OTHER MONTH ON SATURDAYS

**12PM-2PM
188 VALLEY ST.
PROVIDENCE**

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER WITH LINK PROVIDED

EMAIL: MENTORING@BIGSRI.ORG

ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE LEADERSHIP, EMPATHY, AND TEAMWORK.

ENCOURAGE POSITIVE SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCES.

CREATE A COMMUNITY WHERE BOYS FEEL SEEN AND SUPPORTED

MENTORS CAN JOIN ONE SESSION AT A TIME. JUST BE PRESENT - NOT PERFECT. WE TAKE CARE OF FOOD, ACTIVITIES, GUESTS & MORE!.

An 11-year-old boy currently on the waiting list for a Big Brother, and eager to participate in LBH said, “I just want someone to talk to about my favorite stuff like sports, drawing, and video games. I think this program sounds cool because you can do things with other kids, too.”

To join the LBH program as a mentor visit [here](#) or for more information on how you can make a difference in a young boy's life, click [here](#).

TRIS Recipient Daisha Jackson Hosts 'The Hope Small Business Gala.'

Daisha Jackson, a 2022 [Transform RI Scholarship](#) (TRIS) recipient and Met High School graduate, first gained recognition for her [Yoga4All](#) program. A 20-year-old rising senior at Southern New Hampshire University, Daisha's entrepreneurial spirit continues to shine as she now focuses on helping others to bring their ideas to life.

To celebrate diversity and honor the hardworking young entrepreneurs who keep Rhode Island's small business community thriving, Daisha created [The Hope Small Business Gala](#). The second annual event was recently held at Farm Fresh Rhode Island, showcasing the dedication and creativity of entrepreneurs and local business owners.



Pictured from left to right: Zainabou Thiam and Daisha Jackson.

At this year's gala, Zainabou Thiam, owner of [Sunu Body](#) was awarded a \$1,500 grant to support the growth of her business. Sunu Body builds ethical, respectful partnerships with African artisans, ensuring fair compensation and honoring their craftsmanship. Sunu Body's products offer a bridge between the African Diaspora and African heritage, sharing timeless beauty secrets passed down through generations.

“Zainabou's vision and dedication truly inspired us all,” said Jackson. “With thoughtful review by POC members, selecting a recipient was no easy task. We're grateful for their support in making this possible.”

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