

Papitto Opportunity Connection

December 2024



Star Kids Scholarship Program Celebrates Amazing Milestone

This year, The Newport/Fall River Star Kids Scholarship Program celebrated a major milestone — the 100th Star Kids graduate! Star Kids helps children who have a parent with a history of incarceration and/or substance abuse. The program is devoted to providing educational opportunities by administering financial assistance in the form of private school tuition aid, as well as wrap-around support funding.



Images above and below are courtesy of The Newport/Fall River Star Kids Scholarship Program

The goal is for each Star Kid to graduate from high school and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and to show them possibilities beyond substance abuse and incarceration.

With the help of a grant from Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC), Star Kids was able to provide essential resources such as tuition scholarships, tutoring, after school programs, summer camps, and more.

Star Kids graduation rates stand at 95% and 92% of their graduates pursue post-secondary education. This is substantially higher than those of financially-challenged students statewide — 77% and 54% respectively. Further and perhaps most importantly, no Star Kids graduate has ever been incarcerated.



According to an upcoming graduate and a Star Kids student, “The past few months all I have been thinking about is my future and how far I have come, and none of it would be

possible without you.”

“The Star Kids Program is more than just an education initiative; it's a lifeline for children navigating the challenges of parental incarceration or substance abuse. By providing scholarships, mentorship and holistic support, we empower our students and help them envision a brighter future for themselves and their families,” said Karen Flanagan, Executive Director.



Justice-Impacted Individuals Benefit From Brown Health’s Workforce Development Program

A specialized workforce program for justice-impacted individuals at [Brown University Health](#) (formerly Lifespan) now has 19 graduates successfully employed in healthcare less than three years after its launch.

Supported by POC, [Brown Health’s Pathway to Employment](#) Workforce Development initiative includes 12 new participants — all who have come in contact with the criminal justice system. The 16-week program includes intensive work readiness training. Participants are paid and benefit from 24/7 case management and a wide range of support services.



Photo courtesy of Brown Health's Pathway to Empowerment Workforce Development Initiative

“According to experts in this field, we are the only ones in the country doing this model of justice impacted work in the healthcare environment,” said Brown Health’s Alexis Devine. “What we’re able to do is a direct result of having a partner in POC that is beyond committed to removing barriers to meaningful employment pathways that lead to career-oriented opportunities.”

Graduates have had an opportunity to move on and work in departments such as radiology, emergency, neuro medical surgical, and medical intensive care, as well as the transport department.

“Pathway to Employment gave me a chance when no one else would and it gave me something real to look forward to,” said Juan Rodriguez. “I can make a difference by showing others that it’s possible to succeed if you just try.”



ELISHA project's Coats4Vets Program

In honor of Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, the [ELISHA project](#) recently held a [special event](#) to honor the bravery and sacrifice of veterans facing hardship. Elected officials and community leaders answered the call as the ELISHA project distributed close to 2,000 Home Depot buckets filled with winter essentials to more than a dozen police departments from Westerly to Woonsocket.



Photos courtesy of the ELISHA project

As temperatures continue to drop, the warm coats, socks, gloves, and hygiene products that were placed in cruisers allow officers to immediately help homeless veterans and others experiencing hardship during winter's frigid months.

This small gesture will make a big impact on those who need it the most.



Rhode Island Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Celebrates Success of Micro-Loan Program At Their "Cafe con Leche" Event

The RI Hispanic Chamber celebrated the success of the Building Bankable Business micro-loan program, supported by POC, at their annual 'Cafe con Leche' breakfast and small business expo earlier this month. Held at the RI Convention Center, the event brings together hundreds of small business owners, along with elected officials and local community leaders.



Pictured above from left to right: POC Founder Barbara Papitto with New England Regional Administrator for the Small Business Administration, Sandra Cano. Oscar Mejias, Executive Director, RI Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Since 2022, POC, the RI Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Navigant Credit Union have increased access to capital for nearly 100 small businesses in the Ocean State. This program is designed to help Latino small business owners and entrepreneurs start new businesses and micro-businesses, increase access to capital, create relationships and history with financial institutions and generate an acceptable and credible credit score.



Considering the recent RI Bridges cybersecurity breach, the United Way of RI has put together some resources for those impacted or who might be at risk.

RI Bridges Hotline

- Phone Number: 833-918-6603

Hours: open Mon-Fri 9am-9pm

- Reference Number: The reference number for RI is B137035, you may asked for it when you call
- What the hotline can help with: Staff will be able to provide general information as well as steps customers can take to protect their personal information
- Households that have had personal information compromised will receive a letter by mail from the State that explains how to access free credit monitoring

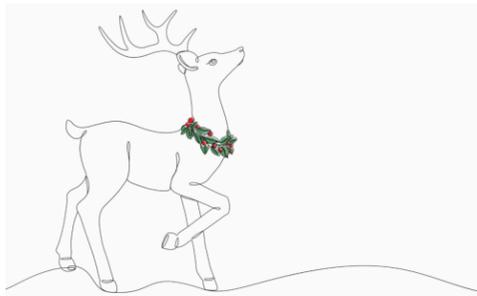
What You Can Do

1. Freeze your credit- Reach out to the credit reporting agencies to freeze your credit. This is free and means no one else can take a loan or establish credit in your name. You won't lose access to your money or credit cards. You can lift the freeze at any time.
2. Monitor your credit- Contact one of the three credit reporting agencies to order a free credit report. You can also access a free credit report through annualcreditreport.com
3. Request a Fraud Alert- Ask one of the credit reporting agencies to place a fraud alert on your files. This is free and lets creditors know to contact you before any new accounts can be opened in your name. Asking one agency to do this will cover this step for all three agencies.
4. Use Multifactor Authentication- This means instead of having just one password to access your information, you have a safety backup to help prove that it's really you before you can log into your account.
5. Be Aware- Because of the breach, you may receive fake emails, phone calls or texts that look legitimate. Remember to never share personal information – such as your social security number, date of birth or password – through an unsolicited e-mail, call or text.

Apply For Benefits

Rhode Islanders seeking to apply for benefits can still submit a paper application. The application and instructions can be found online under "[apply by mail.](#)"

The "Application for Assistance" is available in English, Español, and Português. The application can be mailed to DHS or put in any of their secure drop boxes at all [DHS offices and regional locations.](#)



Season's Greetings!

**Papitto Opportunity Connection
wishes you and yours a safe and
joyous Holiday Season.**

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