

Papitto Opportunity Connection

July 2024

Improving the lives of Rhode Island children has always been a focus for POC, and this month we are excited to share stories from organizations that are making a difference in the lives of children throughout the state.

College Visions Expands to Woonsocket

For two decades, College Visions (CV) has worked to break down barriers and create a successful route to higher education for first-generation college students in Providence. CV's free program includes 1-on-1 advising, resources, guidance, and support to students from the admissions process through college graduation. This year, with support from Mariam Kaba, Papitto Opportunity Connection's first-ever Transform Rhode Island Scholarship winner, CV has now expanded into her hometown, Woonsocket.

This pilot program includes a full-time advisor inside the high school to better serve students, as well as support and guidance for students starting freshman year and continuing through senior year. This summer, CV is also hosting a Summer Prep Program in Woonsocket. Over the course of the five-week program, students will engage in college and career exploration activities, go on a college visit, and visit Fidelity and AAA to learn about career opportunities.



College Visions advisor Joshua Santos at Woonsocket High. 25 Woonsocket students are taking part of the CV Summer Prep Program.

"It is important to have this type of program in Woonsocket because resources for career preparation and college readiness should be accessible to all students," said Mariam Kaba, who recently graduated from Woonsocket High and will attend Northeastern University. "Many students do not know how to seek out resources like I did. Having resources available for the youth in the community is crucial. I've seen the impact College Visions has made in other communities, so I thought it would be amazing to have CV in Woonsocket."

"We knew there was a need in Woonsocket," said Lamont Gordon, executive director, College Visions. "We are thrilled to partner with Woonsocket High to offer greater college access opportunities to WHS students."

Providence Children Museum Expands Programming

As the Providence Children's Museum (PCM) enters its 47th year, it is celebrating its status as the most visited museum in the capital city and Rhode Island's Favorite Museum. Reaching nearly 200,000 visitors a year, the POC grantee is an anchor institution for children, families, and caregivers as they expand beyond traditional programs to support children's development and education.

Often the first cultural institution that RI children visit, PCM allows kids to feel an important sense of ownership in a space that encourages exploration and learning. A recognized leader in digital programming for young children by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), PCM hosts over 20 RIDE play-based enrichment courses, a quarter of which are taught in Spanish.



Images provided by the Providence Children's Museum

"We have extended our expertise in informal education to formal pre-K through 4th grade education," said the museum's executive director, Caroline Payson. "PCM has also piloted and launched our Playful Practicum, teaching Rhode Island Public School teachers to infuse play as a tool for engagement in their classroom toolboxes."

Welcoming to all, an average of 40% of its audience attends the museum with free or reduced admission. This summer, PCM is holding **STEM Sessions** which are designed to spark curiosity and foster learning through hands-on activities like making scribble bots, wind anemometers, popsicle catapults, and paper circuit crafts. Another program called Wheels at Work offers children ages 1-10 an exciting opportunity to explore a variety of vehicles up close, fostering younger visitors' deeper understanding of the world.

"Every child who walks through our doors represents a potential spark of inspiration," Payson said. "I'm hopeful that through our efforts, we'll see a surge in visitors eager to explore, learn, and grow with us."

My HomeCourt Unveils Ninth Street Courts & Mural

Vibrant colors and beautiful designs took center stage as My HomeCourt (MHC) recently unveiled its newly renovated court and mural at Ninth Street Park in Providence. Supported by POC, this initiative includes renovated basketball and tennis courts and features a mural designed by nationally renowned artist Sanford Biggers.

MHC, in collaboration with Providence College Galleries, Friends of Friar Basketball, the City of Providence, Providence Parks, and Providence Arts, Culture & Tourism Department, restores basketball courts and turns them into colorful, inviting works of art to strengthen communities and inspire basketball players of all ages and skill levels.



Images provided by My HomeCourt.

Each My HomeCourt is a unique blend of sports and art, a vibrant, safe, gathering place and a source of pride for the neighborhood.

Ninth Street marks My Homecourt's 5th completed project in Providence's urban core. The first was unveiled at Fagnoli Park in the fall of 2018 followed by The Omar Polanco Courts at Harriet & Sayles Park in fall 2019, Cranston Street Park in 2020, and Davis Park in 2022.

“For anyone who has been to a basketball game at Providence College, you know what a home court advantage is, and the PC Friars have the best home court in college basketball. When the game gets tough and the situation gets critical, a home court advantage makes a difference,” said PC alum Pete Peterson, co-founder of My HomeCourt. “Our goal in creating My HomeCourt is to give every kid in the city of Providence his or her home court advantage so that their hopes and dreams can have a launching pad and come true.”

Commemorating African American History in Providence

If you are interested in knowing more about African American history in our capital city, here is a walking tour you might find enlightening.

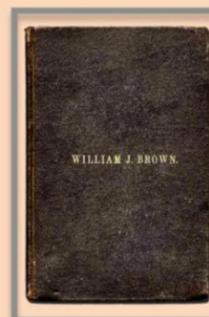
African Americans on College Hill Walking Tour with Ray Rickman

WHEN: Saturday, July 20th at 9:00 AM

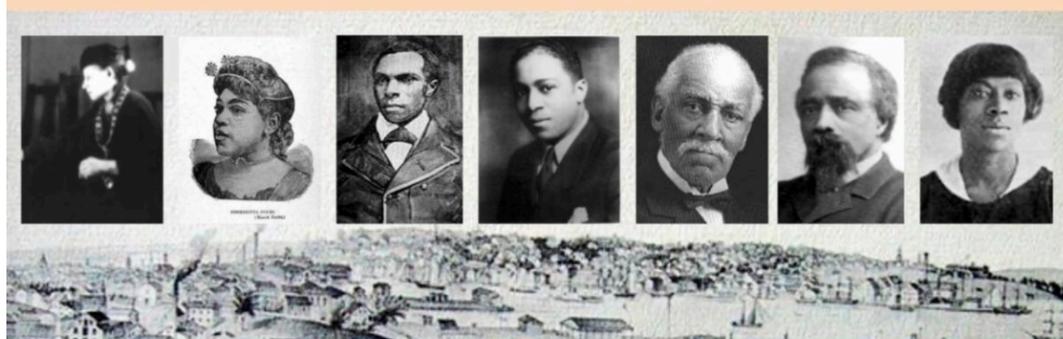
WHERE: Stages of Freedom Museum
10 Westminster Street, Providence

TICKETS: Adults: \$19 Children 12 and under: \$5

Free Coffee Provided! INFO: (401) 421-0606



Explore Providence's oldest neighborhood and the African Americans who lived their varied lives there with Rhode Island's foremost expert, Ray Rickman. Many left an indelible mark on not only the state but the world, including opera diva Sissieretta Jones, landscape artist Edward M. Bannister, and Harlem Renaissance author Rudolph Fisher.



An Update On POC Grant Applications

Creating system change for Rhode Island's communities most in need is behind everything we do at POC. This spring, we were thrilled to receive 24 proposals for the \$1 million Innovation Challenge Grant and 78 proposals for traditional (smaller) grants.

POC is currently evaluating all the proposals and will announce the winners in late September. As a reminder, POC will award two, one-million-dollar grants to unique programs which have the greatest chance of success at achieving mutual goals.

POC will also award a total of one million dollars to a variety of programs that aim to support efforts in the areas of education, job skills training, business, healthcare or housing that directly affect Rhode Islanders.

Stay tuned!

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