

# Papitto Opportunity Connection

May 2024

## Celebrating Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

In May we celebrate the contributions and history that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have made to the shared American experience. Here in the Ocean State, according to the 2020 census, Rhode Island's Asian American population has grown by 28 percent over the past decade. In 2022, Governor McKee signed legislation requiring Asian American history and culture be taught in Rhode Island's public schools.



This year, as part of the national celebration, the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington has created a five-part video series called *Come Through: Asian Pacific American Voices at the Smithsonian*. This engaging and informative series allows visitors to explore the rich tapestry of Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage through the lens of museum objects.

You can learn more [here](#).

## Teatro ECAS: In The Limelight

New England's only Latino repertory theater, Teatro ECAS has been delighting audiences for 27 years. Based in Providence, the nonprofit's mission is to present the best of classic and contemporary Hispanic theater in Spanish, train a generation of actors, and offer educational programming for all ages. As the theatrical troupe enters a new season of performances, Executive Artistic Director Francis Parra, is inspired by their impact and motivated to retain and expand the theater's staff of teaching artists.

Image below: Teatro ECAS



"Our educational programs in the Providence public schools are vital," Parra said. "Te Quiero -Improving Young Lives" serves hundreds of families every year with thoughtful in-school and after-school theater and arts activities, as well as summer camp."

This summer, ECAS is hosting its signature three-week free acting camp for children ages 7 to 13, which culminates in a performance for families and friends. To register, please email Jessica Smith, Educational Coordinator at, [jsmith@teatroecas.org](mailto:jsmith@teatroecas.org).

On June 13th, ECAS will open a musical cabaret called 'La Cooperativa,' a compendium of contemporary burlesque plays, combined with Latin American music, choreography, and a drag queen performance that will make spectators shake.

Tickets or subscriptions are available at, [teatroecas.org](http://teatroecas.org).

## POC Helps Create Housing and Healthcare for Women and Children in Central Falls

Last month, POC, along with Jenks Park Pediatrics and the City of Central Falls celebrated the announcement of a 30-unit housing complex for women and children at risk for homelessness in Central Falls. The project, which includes healthcare, job training and wrap around services, is the first of its kind in Rhode Island.

According to pediatrician, Dr. Beata Nelken, who founded the Central Falls Children's Foundation, Jenks Park has been able to build out infrastructure in three years that would normally take a decade. At the press conference on April 12, Dr. Nelken credited the investment by POC for making this project happen.

Image below (L-R) POC Founder Barbara Papitto, Central Falls Mayor Maria Rivera, Dr. Beata Nelken..



By the end of 2024, POC will have invested more than \$2 million in the Central Falls Children's Foundation to improve health outcomes and the lives of women and children in Central Falls.

POC founder Barbara Papitto spoke at the press conference and complimented the work done by Dr. Nelken and the Mayor of Central Falls, Maria Rivera. "Mayor Rivera and Dr. Nelken saw a pressing need for women and children in Central Falls and moved quickly to address it," she said. "Their efforts are inspiring and emblematic of the kinds of programs Papitto Opportunity Connection is dedicated to investing in. I am thrilled that we can help make their vision a reality."

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

## POC Million Dollar Innovation Challenge: A Call For Systemic Change

Transforming a system to create a lasting difference. In essence, that's the definition of systemic change. It is exactly the principle that the Papitto Opportunity Connection was founded upon in December 2020. In our state of one-million people, creating systemic change is possible, but only if collaboration and shared learning are leveraged to address root causes of issues, rather than the symptoms.



To help, the POC Million Dollar Innovation Challenge grant was created this year to provide funding to those nonprofits in our state who develop bold measures aimed at creating systemic change in the areas of education, job skills training, entrepreneurship, healthcare or housing.

Strong consideration will be given to nonprofits who team up to develop comprehensive proposals, which can be uploaded to the POC online portal between June 1-15, 2024.

Download the POC Million Dollar Innovation Challenge RFP [here](#).

## College Vision's Inaugural Black And Latino Male Fellowship Program

College Visions, (CV) a nonprofit that works tirelessly to break down barriers and create a successful route to higher education for first-generation college students in Rhode Island, recently launched a new fellowship program aimed at increasing the numbers of Black and Latino males in Rhode Island's college pipeline and foster supportive cohorts of Black and Latino men who uplift and guide each other towards academic success.

CV's inaugural Black and Latino Male Fellowship Program, composed of high school juniors from Pawtucket and Providence schools, recently had the opportunity to visit Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD where they were welcomed by Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona and had a chance to meet with RI Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse.

Images below: courtesy of College Visions



The CV students toured George Washington University, visited the National Air & Space Museum and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The students finished their tour in Baltimore where they presented at the annual conference of the National Partnership for Educational Access.

"It was an amazing experience for the students," said Lamont Gordon, Executive Director, College Visions. "They were able to share thoughts about their experience in our program and discuss strategies for getting more Black and Latino males in the college pipeline. And it was a great opportunity for networking, leadership development, and career exposure."

## Make A Big Impact: Become A Big Brother

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

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rhode Island 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.





To address the critical shortage of male mentors, BBBSRI recently launched "Real Skills: Ready and Waiting." Designed to specifically appeal to males, "Real Skills" offers males the opportunity to mentor in a group setting. BBBSRI orchestrates the activities, providing a structured yet dynamic environment for both mentors and mentees.

With support from Papitto Opportunity Connection, the program launched with five male mentors in March and will have more than a dozen enrolled in the new program by June.

"Once engaged in the program, mentors have quickly realized how easy mentoring is and the positive impact they can have on a young male," said Kaleigh Perkins, Chief Operating Officer, BBBSRI. "One of the new male mentors currently enrolled in Real Skills described his mentee as 'such a great kid' and was thrilled that he was able to connect so quickly and share so many things in common."

For more information on how you can become a Big Brother and make a difference in a young boy's life, click [here](#).

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