



## A Tree Rooted In Language And Love

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Images courtesy of The Heart Tree. Co-Founders Minolly Saborio (standing far left wearing sunglasses) and Jorge Saborio (standing far right leaning on table).

In 2021, The Heart Tree founders saw a gap that was hiding in plain sight. Across Rhode Island's foster, adoption, and kinship care system, Spanish-speaking families were opening their homes to children who needed stability, but too often, they were doing it without information, guidance, or support in their own language.

"Many families were willing to open their homes and care for children who needed stability, but often felt alone, confused, or disconnected from available resources," said Heart Tree Co-Founder and Executive Director Minolly Saborio.

The Heart Tree was built to close that gap.

What began as translating paperwork and answering late-night phone calls has grown into a lifeline for hundreds of families. In the past year alone, The Heart Tree reached approximately 700 families through programs, education, resources, and community partnerships. The organization's emergency clothing program and holiday celebrations provide toys and clothing to more than 270 youth. For The Heart Tree, this work is inseparable from culture.

"In Hispanic communities, family often stretches well beyond the household," Saborio said. "Grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, and close friends all form part of the caregiving network. That understanding shapes everything we do, especially in our outreach to grandparents and older relatives raising children again, often while navigating unfamiliar systems on their own."

"Family means community" Saborio says of the The Heart Tree support groups; spaces where someone can say this is happening to me and knowing someone else truly understands.

As Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated nationwide, The Heart Tree's mission stands as a reminder that culturally competent care isn't an added benefit, it's the foundation trust is built on. Their goal remains simple: every family should feel informed, heard, and supported, in the language and culture that is their own.

Whether you can give time, expertise, or financial support, The Heart Tree welcomes volunteers, bilingual mentors, and donors ready to turn their contribution into direct help for a family.

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

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# Quisqueya In Action: Keeping Dominican Heritage Alive

[Learn More](#)

Images above courtesy of Carmen S. Photography and QIA

On the second Sunday in August, a parade in Providence became the epicenter of a global celebration. Music spilled out over the crowd as colorful floats and traditional costumes moved down the parade route. The smell of Dominican food filled the air as families, friends and neighbors gathered to celebrate Dominican culture, Latino heritage, and a shared sense of belonging.

Now in its 39th year, the Dominican Festival & Parade is one of Rhode Island's most anticipated cultural celebrations. Organized by the nonprofit Quisqueya in Action (QIA), the parade's roots can be traced back to the Cepeda sisters, Margarita and Marilyn, and their childhood friends. This Hispanic Heritage Month, Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) is proud to support and celebrate QIA's impact and the many contributions of our Latino neighbors.

“My sister, Margarita Cepeda, started Quisqueya in Action at the age of 16 with a group of young leaders to promote our culture, our history and the language of the Dominican Republic,” said Marilyn, who now leads the organization following Margarita’s storied tenure.

The Cepeda sisters immigrated from the Dominican Republic with a deep vision for shaping Dominican culture in Providence. They valued keeping the culture alive, one that’s especially easy to lose for kids who have never set foot on the island their parents and ancestors call home.

In 1987, with a small group of friends, Margarita organized the first "Fiesta de Restauración Dominicana" at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet in Cranston, drawing roughly 500 people to the folkloric celebration. Early festivals were funded through fundraising events and local sponsors, such as car washes, ‘pastelito’ (hand pies) sales, and door-to-door promotion on Broad Street before Quisqueya in Action became a recognized nonprofit.

A group of young people and a community willing to come together turned the idea into a legacy. Today, over 90 organizations and crowds of upwards of 30,000 people, from Providence and beyond, gather for a carnival style parade that leads to a daylong festival at the Temple To Music at Roger Williams Park.

For QIA, cultural preservation has meant giving people, especially young people, the opportunity to know their culture, participate in it, and eventually carry it forward themselves.

“Culture survives when people choose to carry it forward,” Marilyn said. “That can happen through music, dance, food, language, history, family stories and community gatherings.”

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# Nearly Half Of Rhode Island Households Cannot Make Ends Meet

[Learn More](#)

Images courtesy of United for ALICE

A new report reveals that financial hardship in Rhode Island runs far deeper than official poverty statistics capture, with 43% of Rhode Island households unable to afford the basic cost of living in 2024.

The findings come from ALICE in Rhode Island, a study produced by United Way of Rhode Island in partnership with [United For ALICE](#), a national organization that develops measures of financial hardship. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed: households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but still cannot cover what it costs to live and work in their communities.

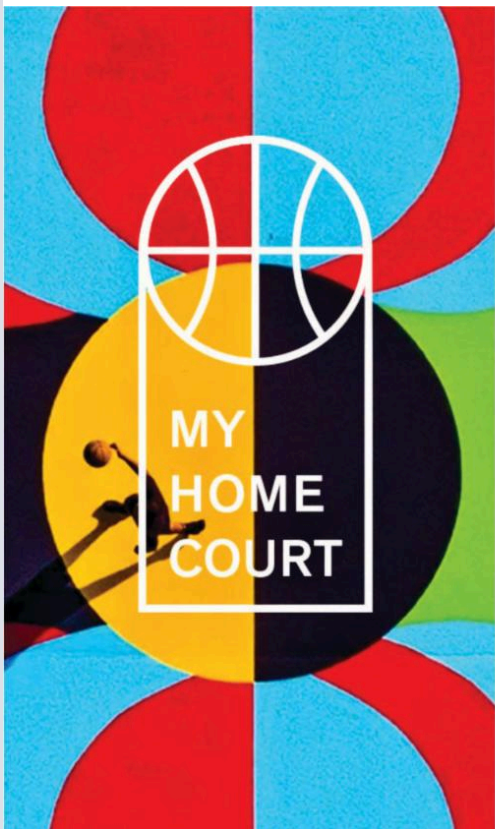
Of that 43%, 13% fell below the federal poverty line. The remaining 29% are working households who earn too much to qualify for most public assistance programs but earn too little to pay for essentials like housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and technology. Because so many assistance programs use the Federal Poverty Level as their eligibility threshold, these families are often left without a safety net or a way to make ends meet.

Rhode Island's hardship rate exceeds the national average of 41%.

This research puts a concrete number on what that struggle looks like. In 2024, a family of four in Rhode Island needed \$111,000 a year just to cover the basics, with nothing left over for savings or unexpected expenses. To illustrate the gap, United For ALICE uses the example of two full-time workers, a cook and a bank teller, who together earned \$86,810 combined. The Federal poverty level for a family of four was \$31,200, a national figure that does not account for the actual cost of living in any place. Especially not in Rhode Island, which ranks among the top 13 most expensive places to live, according to Forbes Magazine.

For ALICE households, the math simply doesn't work. When a car breaks down or a medical bill arrives, there is often nothing set aside to cover it. Each month can come down to a choice between paying an utility bill or filling a gas tank, between groceries or a medical prescription.

The ALICE framework is designed to give community partners, including United Ways, foundations, government agencies, corporations, and nonprofits, the data and tools they need to build policies and programs that address this hidden hardship and improve conditions for working families across Rhode Island.



# Manton Heights Gets A New My HomeCourt

[Learn More](#)

Photos courtesy of My HomeCourt. Top right image: Youth from Providence Manton Heights community celebrate the opening of the newly transformed basketball court. Bottom right image: The latest My HomeCourt was recently unveiled at Manton Heights in Providence.

My HomeCourt, in collaboration with the [Providence Housing Authority](#) (PHA), has transformed the basketball court at Providence's Manton Heights into a vibrant, colorful gathering space for residents of all ages.

Designed by Providence artist Alyssa Barnes, the court mural celebrates community and friendship, creating a welcoming, beautiful place for everyone to play.

“Revitalizing a basketball court is not only about the design. It's about creating beautiful places which become a HomeCourt advantage for every kid. A place to

play, to dream, to build friendships, and to experience what it means to be on a team,” said Pete Peterson, Co-Founder, My HomeCourt. “This belongs to the Manton Heights community, and we hope it becomes a place they’re proud to call their HomeCourt.”

My HomeCourt, Friends of Friar Basketball, and the City of Providence transform basketball courts into living works of art - creating safe spaces that strengthen communities and inspire players of all ages and skill levels.

Manton Heights marks My HomeCourt’s 7th completed project in Providence’s urban core. Supported by POC, My HomeCourt’s journey began at Fagnoli Park in 2018, followed by courts throughout the city including Harriet & Sayles Park, Cranston Street Park, Ninth Street Courts, Jim Ahern Park and Davis Park.

The most recent project included new surfacing, fencing, hoops, and artwork, funded through the PHA’s federal Capital Grant Program and Providence Neighborhood Improvement Fund grant.

More than a basketball court, Manton Heights now has a new My HomeCourt \_ a place to play, connect, and build memories.

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# College Visions Receives \$150,000 Donation From The

# Red Sox Foundation

[Learn More](#)

Top image courtesy of College Visions. Bottom images courtesy of the Red Sox Foundation

For College Visions, a recent night at Fenway Park was about more than baseball. The Red Sox gave fans plenty to celebrate on a late summer evening with a win over the San Francisco Giants, but for College Visions, there was more to cheer about. Before the first pitch, the Providence-based non-profit organization was honored on the field with a \$150,000 Special Recognition Award from the [Red Sox Foundation](#).

The award celebrates College Visions' commitment to helping first-generation students pursue college, build careers, and become the next generation of leaders.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this extraordinary recognition and investment from the Red Sox Foundation," said College Visions Executive Director Lamont Gordon. "This award is a powerful affirmation of our students and the impact College Visions is having across Rhode Island. It comes at an exciting moment as we continue to grow our reach."

Supported by POC, College Visions supports first-generation students through their college journey, from applying and enrolling to graduating and preparing for the workforce. More than 550 RI students participate in CV annually. Nearly 100% of CV Scholars enroll in college, and more than 70% graduate within six years, significantly higher than the national rate for first-generation students.

The \$150,000 award will help College Visions build on that momentum, reaching even more young people across Rhode Island.

The Red Sox may have taken the win that night, but for College Visions, there was another victory worth celebrating: an investment in the future of Rhode Island's first-generation students.



## One Platform,

# One Year Later: How HumanixOS Came Together For POC Grantees

[Learn More](#)

Image courtesy of HumanixOS

When POC set out to solve a problem its grantees had been living with for years – a 501 Database system that felt clunky and unresponsive to the way nonprofits actually operate – it turned to Yconic.ai to build something better from the ground up.

The result, HumanixOS, is the product of a full year of development, built by a team of six engineers who worked directly with nonprofit staff to understand what was actually slowing them down. Already, a dozen POC grantees have migrated to the new system.

"We didn't want to build another piece of software that nonprofits had to adapt themselves to," said Arnell Milhouse, developer of HumanixOS at Yconic.ai. "We spent a year sitting with organizations, watching how they actually managed clients, donors, volunteers, and grants day to day. What we built reflects that one system, one login, one place where all of that information lives and talks to itself."

That approach shows how the platform works. Client records, donor history, volunteer hours, service tracking, and grant deadlines are no longer scattered across separate logins and spreadsheets. Reports that once took hours of manual cross-referencing can be pulled together in a few clicks. Each organization's data remains fully isolated, with permissions controlled entirely by that organization's own staff.

For POC grantees, the arrival of HumanixOS marks a real shift away from a tool that had become a daily frustration. As a benefit of their grant relationship with POC, each organization will receive five years of full access to the platform at no cost along with hands-on, on-site training, and ongoing support as staff move away from their previous system.

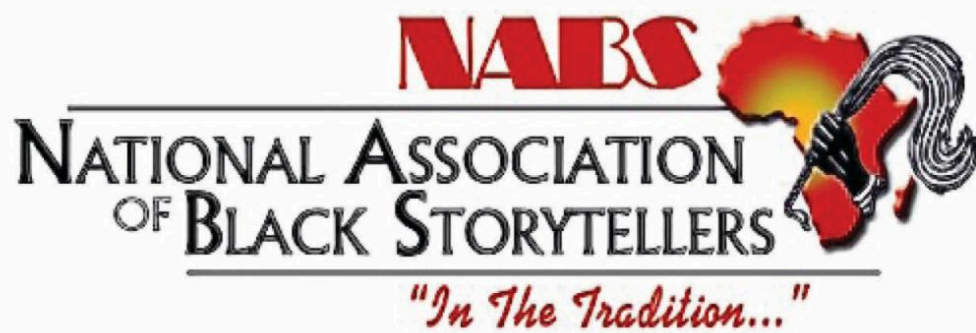
"A year of building this doesn't mean much if organizations feel stranded when they switch over," Milhouse added. "That's why on-site training and real support are part of this from day one, not an afterthought."

For grantees who have spent years working around a system that wasn't built for them, HumanixOS represents something different: a platform shaped by their own

feedback, backed by ongoing support, and provided as part of the partnership POC has built with them.

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## RI Grown Day: Producer Symposium



## News & Notes

### Celebrate 2nd Annual RI Growth Day

On October 5, 11am-3:30pm, Farm Fresh in Providence will host the RI Department of Environmental Management's second annual RI Grown Day. Attendees will hear from legislators, learn about available funding and resources and connect with fellow farmers and agricultural professionals from across the Ocean State.

To save your spot, click [here](#).



### RI Black Storytellers Celebrates 44th Annual NABS

Looking to help an organization by volunteering? RI Black Storytellers need some help as they host the 44th Annual National Association of Black Storytellers (NABS) "In the Tradition..." Festival & Conference, Nov. 4-8 at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick.

This incredible celebration of Black storytelling, culture, history, art, and community takes many hands to bring to life — and volunteering is a great way to

get involved, meet people, and experience the energy of NABS from behind the scenes.

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

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