

Papitto Opportunity Connection

February 2022

February is Black History Month, a time to recognize the achievements and sacrifices made by African Americans who have struggled with adversity and helped shape the United States.

This month we are highlighting some of our community partners that are making an impact and successfully breaking barriers for communities of color right here in Rhode Island.

RIBBA Rhode Island Black Business Association

Rhode Island Black Business Association is committed to providing dynamic leadership, advocacy and economic empowerment to strengthen and promote sustainable growth and prosperity within Rhode Island's underserved communities.



Small Program Makes Big Impact

In just a few short months, the Rhode Island Black Business Association's microloan program has made a significant impact on local black-owned businesses.

Since RIBBA expanded its microloan program in the fall with support from POC, the Providence-based non-profit organization has distributed 39 microloans (up to \$3,000 ea.) to viable startups and small businesses to allow growth, sustainability and continuity.

A microloan proved to be a sweet deal for Nina Reed, owner of Sarcastic Sweets, a mobile dessert truck offering specialty cupcakes and more. Reed, who has been featured on the Food Network, was able to increase the pay of two of her employees and add two employees to her staff.

The microloan program is designed to complement the variety of programs and services that RIBBA has been offering for nearly 11 years.



Mark Your Calendar

401Gives, Statewide Day of Giving

Powered by [United Way of Rhode Island](#) and presenting sponsor Papitto Opportunity Connection, 401Gives is a Rhode Island statewide day of giving on April 1, 2022. "401" is, of course, a nod to our area code.

The 24-hour long, online fundraising campaign is designed to bring a collective voice to the nonprofit community of all sectors, sizes, and geographical regions throughout Rhode Island and deepen the state's culture of giving.

This giving challenge combines a state-of-the-art platform with a sophisticated media strategy to highlight the impact of Rhode Island's nonprofit sector, which accounts for approximately 18% of the state's total workforce.

To help be successful nonprofits receive fundraising templates, tools and trainings from the United Way to help them be successful on 401Gives day and throughout the year.

401Gives brings people together to make a difference for local nonprofits that deliver vital services to our communities throughout the state.

"Connecting and collaborating to bring Rhode Island's non-profit communities together is a core part of POC's mission, and we are proud to stand together with the United Way of Rhode Island to help strengthen our state's non-profit sector," said **Barbara Papitto**, founder and trustee of the Papitto Opportunity Connection. "401Gives is a great opportunity for everyone to learn more about the important work of the non-profit community, and we hope those stories inspire others to give to organizations that are meaningful to them."



United Way of Rhode Island



Making a Difference

Brown University Urban Education Fellow, Sylvio Gario

Sylvio Gario never imagined he would want to become a teacher. As a young boy, Gario was unruly and unfocused. Gario's teachers encouraged him to improve his behavior, but he wouldn't listen. His poor behavior continued until he entered high school where a black teacher told him that if he stopped his foolishness, he could achieve great things. This time, he listened.

He learned in order to accomplish anything, he needed an education. Gario buckled down and went on to earn a scholarship to the New England Institute of Technology, where he received a bachelor's degree in electronics engineering.

He later discovered his love for teaching and enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) at the Urban Education Fellowship Programs at Brown University. Upon completion of the program, Gario must teach in Providence for three years.

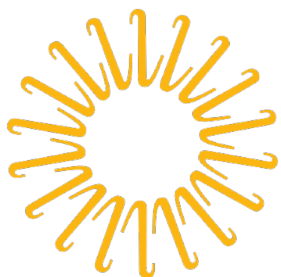
"The educational system does not favor intelligent, curious, but underprivileged students of color. I hope to become a teacher who will help my students and my community flourish by providing structure, knowledge and safety," said Gario.



Workforce Opportunity

Lifespan, the state's largest employer, is currently recruiting people of color in its [Workforce Solutions, Training and Teamwork \(STAT\)](#) program. Workforce STAT offers free education to underemployed and unemployed adults 18 years of age and older to become certified for entry-level healthcare positions in nursing, mental health, pharmacy and more. The program includes in-field learning, job skills training, financial support for barriers to employment, and case management services.

"This is truly a transformational program that will directly create good paying, career-oriented jobs for Rhode Island's BIPOC community, while at the same time strengthening our state's healthcare system," said **John A. Tarantino**, managing trustee of the Papitto Opportunity Connection.



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