

## Ex-landfill boss heads JR Vinagro

### Growing Johnston hauler takes over Cardi Corp.'s Warwick HQ

By RORY SCHULER



The ex-boss at the Central Landfill has taken over as CEO of J.R. Vinagro Corporation, following his resignation last month. And his new employer, Vinagro Corp. has now taken over road and bridge construction contractor Cardi Corporation's Warwick headquarters.

The trucks outside the 400 Lincoln Ave. facility still say Cardi, but the phone in the lobby rings directly to a voicemail message identifying the new company as "Vinagro Materials."

The dumpster bears the "Vinagro" logo. At the time of his departure, former Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) Executive Director Joseph Reposa was earning a \$253,239.48 annual salary, plus a \$25,000 annual performance bonus, according to RIRRC's responses to public record requests.

According to his Linked In profile, Reposa joined Johnston demolition, recycling and asbestos abatement contractor J.R. Vinagro in December 2023, immediately following his resignation from the quasi-public RIRRC.

The RIRRC Board of Commissioners has since launched a search committee for a new executive director. Attorneys for RIRRC have insisted all inquiries for information follow official public records request procedure.

Seeking clarity regarding the current leadership structure at the Ocean State's lone operating landfill, Beacon Communications staff (publisher of the Johnston Sun Rise, Cranston Herald and Warwick Beacon) have filed 11 public records requests since Reposa's resignation. On Friday, RIRRC responded to the last of the outstanding requests.

#### Investigative Proceedings

The first RIRRC public record request sought "all documentation relating to the 'investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct' ... noted on the Dec. 8 (RIRRC Board of Commissioners meeting) agenda."

LANDFILL - PAGE 7



**Joseph Reposa** · 3rd  
CEO at J.R. Vinagro Corporation

J.R. Vinagro Corporation · Rice Business - Jones Graduate School of Business  
Greater Boston

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#### Experience

**CEO**  
J.R. Vinagro Corporation · Full-time  
Dec 2023 - Present · 2 mos  
Rhode Island, United States

**Executive Director**  
State of Rhode Island  
Jun 2017 - Dec 2023 · 6 yrs 7 mos  
Providence, Rhode Island Area  
Recruited as Executive Management responsible for the development and operating of... see more

**NEW BOSS:** Former Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) Executive Director Joseph Reposa announced on LinkedIn that he has been hired as J.R. Vinagro's new CEO. (Screenshots from LinkedIn)



**THE ROAD AHEAD:** Road and bridge contractor Cardi Corporation's Lincoln Avenue headquarters in Warwick has been taken over by J.R. Vinagro Corp. of Johnston. Vinagro has also hired the former boss from the Central Landfill, ex-RIRRC Executive Director Joseph Reposa. At right, The view from directly outside the RIRRC headquarters on Shun Pike shows a beehive of activity. RIRRC runs the Ocean State's lone operating Central Landfill. RIRRC oversees Rhode Island's Materials Recycling Facility, Leaf and Yard Compost, and Eco-Depot. (Beacon Communications photo by Rory Schuler)



## Is time finally right for an independent inspector general? R.I. GOP thinks so

By CHRISTOPHER SHEA

It's a new year, but Republican leadership have the same resolution they've been pushing for over two decades: Create an independent Office of Inspector General to root out government corruption and wasteful spending.

The Rhode Island GOP renewed the call Tuesday as state party Chairman Joe Powers and leaders from both chambers of

the General Assembly gathered for a press conference inside the State House library. The proposal could come at the cost of operations for the Office of the Office of the Lieutenant Governor as GOP officials would cut its budget to fund this new initiative.

The state already has an Office of the Auditor General, which evaluates programs for the legislature, and an Office Of Internal

IG - PAGE 8



#### PERENNIAL PROPOSAL:

House Minority Leader Mike Chippendale, a Foster Republican, speaks at a press conference at the State House library on Jan. 2, 2024. He and Senate Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz, a North Smithfield Republican, are calling on the state to create an independent Office of the Inspector General. (Christopher Shea/Rhode Island Current)



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# JHS Panther of the Week



**POTW:** This week's Panthers of the Week are Abbigaelle Cenafils and Marleny Abreu. Abbigaelle and Marleny are freshmen at Johnston High and were nominated by Ms. Kerry Murphy. Ms. Murphy said, "It is not protocol to recommend two students at once. However, I must give a shout out to these two freshmen in a manner that honors them both. They have the power to make a teacher's day, as well as those of their peers. They help each other and their classmates, ask for extra guidance to keep progressing in their studies, and consistently go above and beyond! Abbigaelle might brighten your day with homemade cheesecake and her enthusiasm as she sees improvement in her artwork. Marleny will likely make you smile with her gift of art, which I love hanging up around the classroom! They both bring their best selves to class each and every day, and they both understand what it means to be a Panther!" (Photo submitted by Matt Velino, Johnston High School Principal)

**Editor's Note:** This is the newest installment of an ongoing weekly series highlighting Johnston's amazing students. Staff at Johnston High School will be nominating students and submitting a caption and a photo for publication. You'll find each week's winning Panther within the pages of the Johnston Sun Rise.

Say you saw it in the  
**Johnston SunRise**

# Senior 'Spotlite'



**BUT NOT WITHOUT VOLUNTEERS:** The Johnston Senior Center hosted a number of notable celebrities this past Tuesday (Halloween), resulting in many treats for all in attendance. Mary Poppins took home the first prize of the event, which featured "Liberace" on the piano. (Photos courtesy Richard J. DelFino Jr.)

## JSC in 'critical need' of more volunteers to make 2024 'greatest year ever'

By **RICHARD J. DELFINO JR.**  
Special to the Sun Rise

The Johnston Senior Center "Spotlite" this week shines on a critical need, and what really is a lifeline here at the Center, our volunteers.

Each day, so many give their time to so many wonderful opportunities here at the Center, all focused on promoting and enriching the lives older adults.

Whether its serving daily lunch, staffing our café, decorating the Center throughout the year, preparing our newsletters, or driving our mini-buses, and so on and so on, the Center needs volunteers.

We want 2024 to be our greatest year ever, sponsoring new programs and expanding our existing services. We want our shuttles out discovering all parts of this beautiful state. We want to run workshops, classes, and events that will bring joy to our existing and many new members we hope to bring aboard.

However, all of these plans require volunteers to help all of this be realized. I please ask you consider being part of our team here. If you have a particular talent, or some time to give, please give me a call. We have a specific need for drivers at this time. If you are at all interested, or have any questions, please call at 230-7857. Thank you and hope to speak to you soon.

**Editor's Note:** Richard J. DelFino Jr. serves as Executive Director of the Johnston Senior Center, at 1291 Hartford Ave., Johnston. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes a senior profile, called "Senior Spotlite," submitted by the senior center.





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# Scituate Middle School Students volunteer in Hope's Colvin Park

By CAS LONDERGAN  
Special to the Sun Rise

On a Friday late last year, Scituate Middle School students eagerly put their gardening skills to the test after hearing that Hope Associates, Inc. had reached out to the school's Principal Dana Morel, asking if any students were interested in volunteering to plant bulbs at Colvin Park, located on Main Street in Hope. In just 60 minutes, thirteen enthusiastic middle school students were able to plant over 700 bulbs within the park. Hope Associates, Inc. is a local non-profit whose mission is conservation of property along the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River.

"When I received the request for student volunteers to help beautify Colvin Park I reached out to Ms. Beth Travers, who leads our very active Agricultural Club, and Ms. Ann Batey, who leads our National Junior Honor Society group," said Morel. "These teachers organized students from grades 6 through 8 who were excited to volunteer for this

project."

Colvin Park is dedicated to Lloyd and Barbara Colvin, who provided many years of service to the Town of Scituate. A generous donation was received at the dedication of the park to provide landscaping work. With the funds from the donation, Hope Associates purchased seven varieties of bulbs, numbering 1200 in total. With the help of the SMS students, most of the bulbs were planted in one day.

Students met at the Hope Library immediately after school dismissal and walked to the park together. Planting holes had been previously drilled by Donna Faria, Ralph Groves, and Bob Morse. Student's were organized into teams, each team was responsible for planting different varieties of bulbs on Nov. 10.

After the work was finished students were treated to hot chocolate served by Ruth Strach. The students who volunteered were Lily Werbecki, Kali Esposito, Maria Saunders, Isabella Brown, Kelsey Gallucci, Charlotte Belleville,



**BULBS OF HOPE:** Scituate students put their gardening skills to the test after hearing Hope Associates, Inc. reached out to the school's Principal Dana Morel, asking if any students were interested in planting bulbs at Colvin Park in Hope. (Courtesy photo)

Sarah Curria, Avery Cavanagh, Gabriella DeRosa, Krysta Maguire, Charlotte Snow, Talea Lewis, and Lea Aquino.

Morel continued, "We are so proud of our students for taking on this venture, it's wonderful to see them taking an interest in community service at such a

young age."

**Editor's Note:** Cas Londergan serves as Associate Director of Communications at TMS. You can reach her via email at [c.londergan@teamtms.org](mailto:c.londergan@teamtms.org).

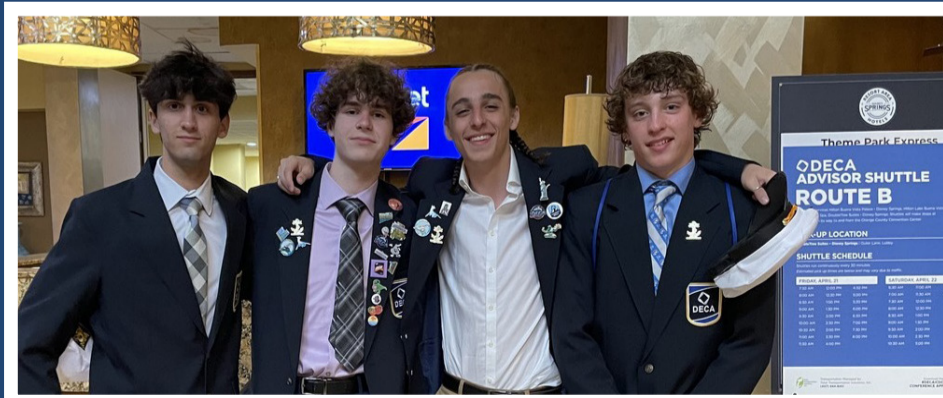
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# Opinion

EDITORIAL

## Can artificial intelligence optimize journalism?

It may very well give a reader whiplash at how rapidly the onset of the artificial intelligence (AI) era has been ushered into our everyday discourse — but make no mistake, it is here, and not going anywhere.

AI is already being utilized in services you utilize every day, from the search engines you rely on to find information on the internet to the systems running logistics for the companies that deliver goods and medicines to our grocery stores and pharmacies. Its use will only continue to expand as the machine learning systems driving these AI algorithms continue to evolve and improve.

While examining the intricacies and plethora of effects AI will have on our lives is worthy of intense scrutiny and ongoing, careful implementation, there is one area being touched by AI that simultaneously excites and frightens us greatly; and we're not sure which emotion is winning at the moment.

The relationship between artificial intelligence and journalism is a thorny one. Immediately, the mere junction of the two terms brings about images of a North Korean-esque dystopia where the news is written by machines built by shady government entities hellbent on spinning every story in their benefit, and so fundamentally obfuscating and gatekeeping the truth that their actions can never be called into question through traditional journalistic methods.

On the other hand, the power of AI as a tool for journalists is a tempting one. Rather than have one perpetually overworked journalist try to break down a 400-page report on the mechanical infrastructure of a bridge that nearly collapsed, which could take weeks to do properly, a journalist could potentially feed the report through an AI system that assembles a 20-page summary of the most crucial information. That summary would provide linked citations for where the information came from in the original report, so the journalist can independently verify the work of the machine and save dozens of hours of laborious study; opening up more time to perform fact-backed interviews and additional follow-up research, and leading to a much stronger story in less time, while the public's attention is still engaged.

There are a million examples for how AI could benefit journalism, but only if the two industries can get on the same page regarding their use to one another.

Journalists are essential to creating the original reporting and articles that AI systems need in order to become "smarter" about the world around them. This resource should be seen as something fundamentally valuable to the AI industry, and worthy of investment just as publishers should see value in investing in the tools being created by the AI industry.

Rather than seeing how AI is leading to the downfall of journalism, we prefer to believe in a world where a legitimate symbiosis between the two is not only possible, but essential to the survival of both industries.

Whether or not this is actually attainable, and whether or not the government regulators who will ultimately have a large hand in figuring out this generationally tricky equation are up to the task, is another story entirely.



GUEST OPINION

## Renting an affordable apartment has become RI's Impossible Dream

By JOANNE GIANNINI

We have a beautiful state, we really do. We enjoy the miles of ocean, beautiful parks, wonderful restaurants, and good people. You can get from one point in Rhode Island to another in one hour.

What we don't have is affordable housing. Searching for an apartment here is the impossible dream. The lack of housing in Rhode Island is beyond a crisis. How can people survive? A recent survey has shown Rhode Island (Providence) has the highest rents in the country. The average rent for a two bedroom in Little Rhody is \$1500 with no utilities. And this is considered low. What you get for that is usually a dump.

What do tenants expect? They expect a warm, comfortable and safe place to live that is up to housing codes. They expect to be able to not worry that pipes are going to burst, or heat go off in the middle of night, or have strangers banging on their door at all hours. Is this too much to ask?

And can it be affordable? Along with being a landlord, comes a responsibility to maintain your rentals. If something needs to be fixed or unforeseen damage occurs, that is not the tenants fault, landlords need to make sure the property is livable.

When and why did apartment prices reach their peak? After Covid hit Rhode Island, everything changed. People lost jobs, didn't or couldn't work, businesses closed and living conditions changed. People couldn't afford to maintain their properties. The cost of living went up and building material priced increased immensely. Everything did.

But some landlords became greedy. They saw the lack of housing and gouged their rental prices high. Due to the lack of housing, apartments became increasingly unaffordable for the average working per-

son who lives paycheck to paycheck. What you get for \$1500 in Rhode Island is not much. One only needs to go online and check rentals, to see the prices charged.

What can be done to change this? New laws can be made to stop the landlords from increasing prices in rents. New laws should be made to make sure the tenants are protected if damages occur that are not their

fault. We live in a society that use to care about each other in good and bad times. I see such a big change in our society now. Many don't want to get involved and are apathetic to what's going on. That's too bad, because the future for our children depends on how we live our lives. The examples that are set are embedded into their memories forever.

A single mom with a child on minimum wages really has it hard. They tell you there are programs and assistance out there, but if you work, you don't qualify. Thus, many are forced to go on welfare, even if they would rather work. Why can't there be programs for working single mothers who need rent assistance?

People are feeling the crunch. Christmas is coming and many cannot afford food or medicine just to keep up with rent. It's sad to say, but we lost our way. We forgot what's really important and it starts right in our own backyards. Affordable housing is the new impossible dream in Rhode Island. Until new laws and programs are made at the state house, it will continue.

I remember watching a movie where a slum landlord was sentenced by a judge to live in one of his rentals and he couldn't survive. Maybe life needs to imitate that movie here in Rhode Island. Then they would get it.

**Editor's Note:** Joanne Giannini, of Providence, is a freelance writer and former State Representative.



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# SUN RISE SCOOPS

## SCOOP OF THE WEEK

Jan. 10

### JRTC hosts 'Signature Party'

The Johnston Republican Town Committee (JRTC) has announced a "Signature Party" for the upcoming Republican Presidential Primary petition period, according to a JRTC press release.

"In anticipation of the upcoming Republican Presidential Primary Petition Period, the Johnston Republican Town Committee is thrilled to announce two signature parties dedicated to gathering support for the Republican Presidential candidates," according to the JRTC. "These events invite community members to participate by signing petitions in support of Republican candidates for the upcoming Presidential Primary. It's a fantastic opportunity for individuals to actively engage in the political process."

The second remaining event is scheduled Wednesday, Jan. 10, 12 p.m. to 1:30



p.m., at Brewed Awakenings, 1577 Atwood Ave., Johnston. (The JRTC also held an event on Dec. 31.)

For more information, reach out to Sandra Taylor at info@johnstonri.gop.

## Sun Rise Staff Reports

Jan. 13

### A Celebration of Life for Ernie Gifford

The Hope Historical Society invites the community to join us as we celebrate Ernie Gifford's passion for all things historical to the Village of Hope and surrounding areas. HHS will showcase Ernie's best and most interesting historical research. The tribute will be held during the regular meeting on Sat., Jan. 13 at 2 p.m. at the Howland Barn on 35 Ryefield Road, Hope. Refreshments will follow.

### NAMI-RI Offers Family Support Groups

The RI chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-RI) offers free support groups for families and friends of loved ones who are struggling with their mental health. The groups are led by trained facilitators who also have lived experience as family members themselves. The group meetings last about 1.5 hours, and everyone who participates in the meeting gets a chance to share. The other members of the group try to offer help and resources, when appropriate, based on their own experiences. More information and full schedule can be found at namirhodeisland.org or call 401-331-3060. No pre-registration for these monthly groups is necessary.

First Thursday at 6 p.m. In-person only at the Rochambeau Library in the Community Room, Rochambeau Library, 708 Hope Street, Providence (NEW-starts Aug.)

Second Tuesday at 5 p.m. In-person only at the Middletown Public Library in the Community Room. Middletown Library, 700 West Main Road, Middletown.

Third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Meets via Zoom only. Please call 401-331-3060 or email info@namirhodeisland.org for the Zoom link.

Fourth Wednesday at 6 p.m. In-person only at the Hope Valley Grange, 71116 Main St., Hope Valley.

struggling with mental health issues. Together with our grassroots volunteers, we work every day to provide help and hope to millions of Americans. Volunteers are essential to the work that we do at NAMI Rhode Island, and we are always seeking enthusiastic people to help us achieve our mission. For more information about our family programs and volunteer training, email beth@namirhodeisland.org, call the NAMI-RI office 401-331-3060 or visit our website at namirhodeisland.org.

### Soul of '71 Scholarship Fund

In 2021, the Johnston High School Class of 1971 established The Soul of 1971 Scholarship Fund at The Rhode Island Foundation. The Class of '71 is the first class in the history of the Johnston School System to establish a permanent Fund. The Fund currently stands at \$23,031. Scholarships have been awarded in 2022 and 2023 to deserving JHS seniors. For additional information or to make a donation, contact Harold J. Hemberger at hembergerharold@gmail.com. All funds on deposit are managed by The Rhode Island Foundation.

### Help OSDRI restock their pantry

Operation Stand Down Rhode Island needs your help. Their food pantry needs a major restocking. See a list of needed nonperishable items in the photo.

Like many people, OSDRI's clients have been faced with some real obstacles these past couple of years. With your help, they pledge to always be there to give a hand up for veterans and their families in need.

Items can be dropped off Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at OSDRI's main office, 1010 Hartford Ave., Johnston. If you have any questions or would like more information, call the OSDRI office at 401-383-4730.

**Editor's Note:** Send submissions to Sun Rise Editor Rory Schuler at rorys@rhodybeat.com or Front Desk Coordinator Ida Zecco at idaz@rhodybeat.com. Photos in jpg format are accepted and news can include community events, promotions, academic news and nonprofit events. Email today and see your news in our column in the Johnston Sun Rise. Please include a daytime telephone number in case we require any further information.

## LEGAL NOTICES

### CITATION

State of Rhode Island  
PROVIDENCE, S.C.  
Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court

PETITION TO FORECLOSE  
RIGHT OF REDEMPTION  
PM-2023-05471

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, and CLARA SPINA, ANGELINA ZOGLIO, ELAINE MATARESE, GUY V. PIROLI, JEAN A. SPINA AND THEIR UNKNOWN HEIRS AND ASSIGNS; THE RI DIVISION OF TAXATION and all other persons unknown or unascertained claiming or who may claim any right, title, estate, lien or interest in the real estate involved which is or might become adverse to the Petitioner's right, title or interest therein as alleged, or which does or may constitute any cloud upon Petitioner's title as set forth in Petition.

Whereas, a petition has been presented to said Court by AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE PROPERTIES, LLC, of 140 RESERVOIR AVE, PROVIDENCE, RI and said State, to foreclose all rights of redemption from the tax lien proceedings described in said petition in and concerning a certain parcel of land situated in the

Town of Johnston and in said State, bounded and described in said petition as follows:

THOSE TWO (2) CERTAIN LOTS OF LAND WITH ALL BUILDINGS OR IMPROVEMENTS THEREON, SITUATED ON THE WESTERLY SIDE EOF COOLIDGE STREET AND ON BOTH SIDES OF DAVIS STREET, IN THE TOWN OF JOHNSTON AND STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, LAID OUT AND DELINEATED AS LOT NOS. 21 (TWENTY-ONE), AND 22 (TWENTY-TWO) UPON THAT PLAT ENTITLED "DAVIS PLAT JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND BY J. A LATHAM & SON NOVEMBER 1921" AND RECORD IN THE RECORDED IN THE RECORDS OF LAND EVIDENCE, IN SAID JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND, ON PLAT CARD 98.

Further identified as Assessor's Plat 1, Lot 22 & 23.

If you desire to make any objection or defense to said petition you or your attorney must file a written appearance and answer, under oath, setting forth clearly and specifically your objections or defense to each part of said petition, in the office of the Superior Court in Providence on or before the 8th day of February.

2024 next, that you may then and there show cause, if any, why the prayer of the petition should not be granted.

Unless your appearance is filed by or for you, your default will be recorded, the said petition will be taken as confessed and you will be forever barred from contesting said petition or any decree entered thereon. And in addition to the usual service of this notice as required by law, it is ordered that the foregoing citation be published forthwith once each week for three successive weeks in the JOHNSTON SUN RISE, a newspaper published in said TOWN OF JOHNSTON to wit: January 4th, January 11th, January 18th, 2024

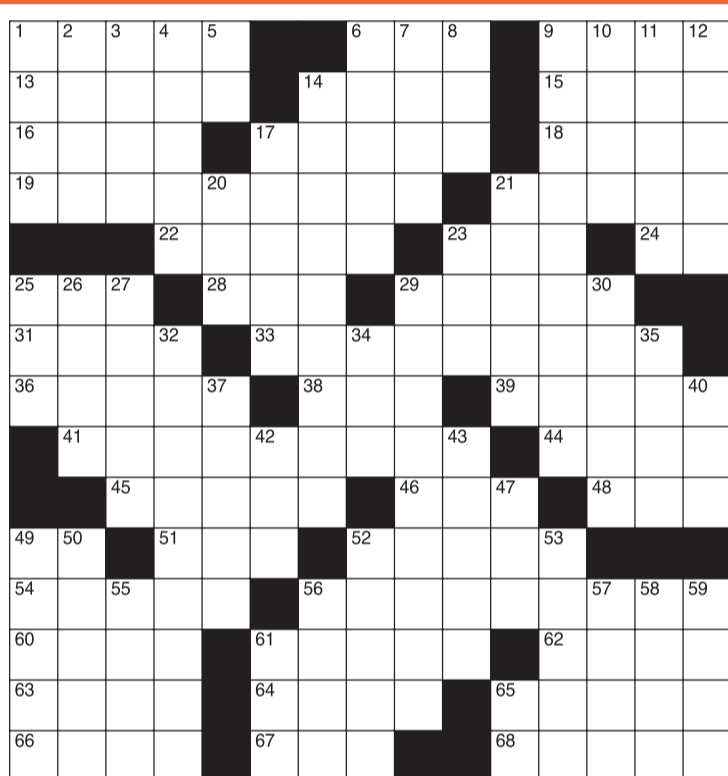
WITNESS the SEAL of our SUPERIOR COURT, at Providence this 27th day of December, 2023.

/s/ Susan M Diggins,  
CLERK

DOUGLAS SMITH  
140 Reservoir Avenue  
Providence, RI 02907

1/4, 1/11, 1/18/24

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Bleated
6. Snakelike fish
9. Database management system
13. Russian-American violinist
14. Wendy's founder Thomas
15. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
16. Negatives
17. Rescued
18. Self-immolation by fire ritual
19. Assigns tasks to
21. Island nation native
22. Trade
23. Detergent brand
24. Famed NY Giant
25. Before
28. Split pulses
29. Extremely angry; highly incensed
31. Body part
33. American state
36. David \_\_, US playwright

### CLUES DOWN

38. Move one's head slightly
39. Secret rendezvous
41. Improved
44. A place to exercise
45. 18-year astronomical period
46. Automobile
48. You can take it
49. A radio band
51. Jaws of an animal
52. Short-billed rails
54. Chinese province
56. Shameless and undisguised
60. Horizontal passage into a mine
61. Adult males
62. Fail to entertain
63. Dried-up
64. City in north-central Utah
65. Southern U.S.
66. German river
67. Oxygen
68. Make law

### CLUES DOWN

1. Curved segment
2. Wings
3. From pentane (Chemistry)
4. Gradually gets into
5. Commercial document (abbr.)
6. Overhang
7. Christmas and New Year's have them
8. Type of bulb
9. Lacking a plan
10. Tattle
11. Rockers like it "heavy"
12. One who's been canonized
14. Indicate time and place
17. Nobel Prize winner in physics
20. The voice of Olaf
21. Fragmented rock
23. They \_\_
25. Master of Philosophy
26. Backside
27. Landmark house in L.A.

### CLUES DOWN

29. An act of undue intimacy
30. From which a later word is derived
32. Equal to 10 meters
34. Neither
35. Computer language
37. Sacred book of Judaism
40. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
42. A way to dedicate
43. Challenges
47. British Air Aces
49. Large, influential bank
50. Portended
52. Cavalry-sword
53. Vaccine developer
55. Napoleonic Wars general
56. Italian Seaport
57. Hip joint
58. \_\_ Clapton, musician
59. Insect repellent
61. Decorative scarf
65. Delaware

be kind  
anyway.

cherry hill manor nursing & rehabilitation center





**THE TRANSITION:**

At left, RIRRC Executive Director Joseph Reposa awaited the start of a pair of public meetings on his last day on the job, Dec. 8.



**NEW BOSS:**

At right, Luigi "Lou" Vergato was named RIRRC interim executive director. (Beacon Communications photos by Rory Schuler)

**Landfill**

(Continued from page 1)

The board discussed the misconduct allegations during executive session that morning, immediately after meeting with Reposa behind closed doors to discuss his job performance and pending resignation.

Jared Rhodes, Director of Policy and Programs at RIRRC, provided the following response:

"Any such records that may exist are not subject to public inspection as they are, (1) records relating to a client/attorney relationship ..., (2) investigatory records of public bodies ..., (3) personnel and other personal individually identifiable records otherwise deemed confidential by federal or state law or regulation, or the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy ..., and (4) Preliminary drafts, notes, impressions, memoranda, working papers and work products ..."

During a break from public session on Dec. 8, David Ursillo, outside counsel for RIRRC, said Reposa's resignation and the misconduct investigation agenda items were separate and unrelated.

**Performance Reviews**

Reposa had the option to have his performance review during open session, but declined.

Following a closed meeting with the RIRRC Board of Commissioners Governance Committee, the board announced Reposa had an excellent performance review and would receive his \$25,000 annual bonus.

On Dec. 19, Rhodes distributed a press release ("Resource Recovery bids a fond farewell to Executive Director Reposa; Deputy Director serving as interim while Chairman leads public search for next hire announcing) praising Reposa's performance during his tenure.

In the press release, Reposa reflected on his six years with RIRRC, noting that "he considered himself blessed to have worked with such a considerate, talented and selfless group of professionals."

Reposa refused comment regarding his next move at the Dec. 8 meeting.

According to the press release, Reposa expressed "how grateful he was for his time with the corporation as it brought out the best in him, but that it was now time for him to begin a new Journey."

RIRRC's longtime Chairman Michael Sabitoni, a Johnston resident and labor leader (Sabitoni was named General Secretary-Treasurer for Laborers' International Union of North America in May 2023) thanked Reposa "profusely not only on behalf of himself but also on behalf of the Board," according to the press release.

"Joe's leadership was absolutely instrumental in achieving the financial stability from which the corporation now benefits," Sabitoni was quoted in the press release. "Not only did Joe find a way to fund the extensive capital improvements that were required for expansion of the landfill, but he did so in a manner that left the corporation debt free and returned an additional 10 years of disposal capacity to the people of the State."

Beacon Communications requested a copy of Reposa's "most recent performance review." The documents were not provided.

"Responsive documents are confidential personnel information consisting of ... personnel and other personal individually identifiable records otherwise deemed confidential," according to Rhodes' response to the public records request.

Since Rhodes handles RIRRC's only sanctioned communications with the public, Beacon Communications also filed a public records request seeking his salary and job requirements as Director of Policy and Programs at RIRRC.

Beacon Communications received a response on Dec. 29. Rhodes' wrote that his annual salary is \$151,205.60, but he does not have a contract (he's an "at will employee").

**Temporary Boss**

On Dec. 8, the board also approved the promotion of Luigi "Lou" Vergato to the role of RIRRC Interim Executive Director.

Vergato rose through the ranks "over 30 years" with RIRRC, from Materials Recycling Facility Operations Maintenance Supervisor to Fleet Manager to his latest position, Chief Operating Officer, according to the press release.

"I look forward to applying the operational, logistical, managerial, and budgetary skills that I have honed while here at the corporation to this new challenge and I ensure you I will dedicate myself one hundred percent to the task at hand until such time that the next Executive Director is formally seated," Vergato said in the press release.

Following the Dec. 8 meeting, Vergato said he had not decided whether to seek the permanent executive director's post.

Vergato's salary was not disclosed at the meeting. Following a public records request, however, Rhodes provided the interim director's annual salary: \$180,000.08.

According to Rhodes, Vergato is also an "at will employee and the corporation does not provide contracts to at will employees."

**Quasi-Public Perks**

In response to a public records request, Rhodes provided copies of RIRRC's employment contract with Reposa, which had been the subject of an "extension agreement" dated a year ago, Jan. 1, 2023.

Besides his more than \$250,000 annual salary, and yearly \$25,000 performance bonuses, Reposa enjoyed a hefty benefits package with RIRRC.

According to his contract, which was revised in 2019, Reposa's salary grew annually (from \$225,000) with a promised "3 percent annual cost of living adjustment."

The contract also includes non-disclosure and anti-competition clauses.

"Employee, pursuant to his employment, will acquire information and knowledge respecting the intimate and confidential affairs of (RIRRC) in the various phases of its business," according to section 4, "Covenants and Conditions." "Accordingly, (Reposa) agrees that at all times, both during his employment and after termination thereof, he shall not divulge to any other person, firm or corporation or in any way use for his own benefit ... any trade secrets or confidential information obtained during the course of his employment with (RIRRC)."

Reposa also agreed not to, following the termination of his contract, "disturb, hire, entice, or in any other manner persuade or attempt to persuade any employee, dealer, supplier or customer of (RIRRC) to discontinue his or its relationship with the Employer."

Reposa received 160 hours (four weeks) of vacation/personal time, annually, as well as paid sick leave, while working for RIRRC. He received "regularly scheduled pension plan contributions on a regular basis" from RIRRC's 401A Profit Sharing Plan.

He also received a \$700 monthly car allowance.

The RIRRC board agreed to keep Reposa on as a consultant during the search for a new executive director.

Beacon Communications submitted a public records request for Reposa's consultancy contract.

"There is nothing further to share on this front as such details have yet to be finalized and formalized in an executed contract," according to Rhodes. "As a result, Mr. Reposa is not currently doing any consultancy work for the corporation and therefore is not getting paid for any such work by the corporation."

**Major Merger**

While he led RIRRC, Reposa refused interview requests from Beacon Communications.

His RIRRC resignation letter was sent via email to all employees on Dec. 6 with the subject line "The Road Ahead."

"Starting Monday, Dec. 11 (2023), I will begin a new journey with a Rhode Island based private company," according to Reposa's "resignation letter," which was provided by Rhodes following a public records request.

"My decision to leave this wonderful place was certainly not without deep consideration but one that I felt was the right opportunity at the right time for me and my family."

Following his Dec. 8 resignation, Reposa's Linked In profile was updated, announcing his hiring as Chief Executive Officer of J.R. Vinagro Corp.

A call for comment and confirmation from J.R. Vinagro had yet to be returned by press-time. Vinagro Corp. has been named as a possible successor to Cardi Corporation, the Ocean State road and bridge contractor that announced late last year it was going out of business.

Cardi Corp.'s closure announcement followed the grinding halt of taxpayer-funded road projects along Routes 24 and 140 in Massachusetts, the ongoing Route 37 project in Cranston, Post Road improvements in Warwick and the revocation of a bid to repair the Washington Bridge in Providence (and several subsequent lawsuits by other bidding contractors and Cardi).

Since Cardi Corp. went out of business, J.R. Vinagro has taken over its Warwick headquarters. Calls to the former Cardi Corp. headquarters were answered by a recording that confirmed the business name has now changed from Cardi to Vinagro Materials: "Thank you for calling Vinagro Materials, formerly Cardi Corporation."

**Ocean State Powerhouse**

J.R. Vinagro, founded by Joseph R. Vinagro, opened for business in 1998 as Patriot Hauling Co., Inc., and now calls itself one of "the Northeast's leading contractors for demolition, recycling, asbestos abatement, and site development services."

"The name was changed to J.R. Vinagro Corporation to distinguish the company from the competition and further celebrate the family name," according to the company website. "Years of experience, dedication and hard work have combined to create excellence in all facets of the business from Asbestos Abatement and Demolition to Land Clearing, Rock Crushing, Site Development, Heavy Hauling and Material Sales."

Over the past few years, Vinagro has donated man-hours and materials to several projects in Johnston, including the War Memorial Park walking path bridge, which was wiped out by a fallen tree. At the time, former Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena told the Johnston Sun Rise that Vinagro saved the town's taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars by volunteering to replace the footbridge. In July 2021, the bridge was dedicated to Nina Vinagro, the company founder's mother.

According to the company website, J.R. Vinagro has become "one of the largest, independently owned and operated demolition, waste hauling, and recycling companies in the Northeast."

J.R. Vinagro Corporation likely did business with RIRRC during Reposa's time as executive director.

On Tuesday, Jan. 2, Beacon Communications sent a twelfth public records request to RIRRC seeking "documentation linked to any payments, receipts, accounts payable, accounts receivable, contracts, projects or any other interaction between J.R. Vinagro Corporation and RIRRC during (Reposa's) tenure."

**Host Town**

According to the FY 22 Audited Financial Statements, RIRRC should be working on a revised Host Community Agreement (HCA) with the town of Johnston: "Due to the fact the current agreement is over 20 years old, the Town of Johnston and RIRRC are reviewing the Host Community Agreement with the intention of updating the current agreement in both parties' best interest."

Asked where the revision process stood, and whether he anticipates any significant changes in the relationship between the town and the landfill, the current mayor offered a brief statement via email.

"I've always had a good relationship with the head of Rhode Island Resource Recovery," Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. wrote Tuesday. "I'm looking forward to meeting with Lou after he gets a chance to settle in and when we meet I'm sure we will discuss the future of both parties to the agreement."

# LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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By JENNIFER COATES

There are times in life when you know you are at the right place at the right time. As we have just ushered in a new year, many of us may be asking, are we indeed "at the right place, at the right time?" For residents of The Preserve at Briarcliffe, the answer to this question can be answered in a single word ~ yes!

The Preserve at Briarcliffe is a vibrant, active, and supportive independent and assisted living community whose residents enjoy a life of catered amenities, safe and comfortable living quarters, engaging and interesting activities, and ongoing opportunities to build meaningful relationships. As part of the Briarcliffe campus in Johnston, it is the latest addition to this family of residences to offer the ultimate in senior living.

Akshay Talwar, the founder and director of Briarcliffe and The Preserve at Briarcliffe, admonishes us to embrace the new year and to regard it as a time of "renewal, rebirth and rejuvenation!" If you or a loved one is wondering if you are at the right place at this time in your life, now is the time to visit The Preserve to see

how you can change that narrative. Talwar explains "it is time to leave behind feelings of depression, isolation and cold" and to come home to The Preserve to "make new friends" and be "surrounded by warmth, good health, compassion and safety."

As soon as you cross the threshold from the chilly outdoors and in to the warm and inviting lobby of The Preserve, visitors feel all the cares of the day just slide off their shoulders. There is an immediate "sense of arrival" ~ a feeling of tranquility and calm. Every detail of this senior living community was intentionally designed to make residents and guests alike feel at home, right from that first impression.

The Preserve at Briarcliffe is composed of sixty-six apartments which were created to meet the specific needs of those who are either completely independent or those who require assistance with such basic needs as medication management or help with simple activities of daily living. The apartments come in six different floor plans from studio-size to one-bedroom units. Each apartment has a kitchenette, "European-style" bathroom for safe and easy, barrier-free access, wheelchair-width doors for those with mobility challenges, and large windows that let in plenty of natural light.

Residents of The Preserve enjoy an array of highly personalized amenities and services such as restaurant-style dining, weekly housekeeping, laundry and linen services, state-of-the-art call and monitoring systems, scheduled transportation to appointments and outings, and so much more.

The Briarcliffe campus includes The Preserve Assisted and Supportive Independent Living Residence | Briarcliffe Gardens & The Cottage Residence Memory Care Assisted Living | Briarcliffe Manor Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation. The campus is in Johnston on 54 Old Pocasset Road. To learn more, call 401.944.2450 or visit Briarcliffe online at www.briarclifferi.com.

# More at Mohr Library

Mohr Library is offering extended programs for elementary-age kids afterschool.

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) is an opportunity for children to "experiment, explore and build" with Ms. Melyssa.

Registration begins Jan. 3 for the following elementary-school-age programs with Ms. Melyssa:

Thursdays at 5 p.m., Jan. 11 through Feb. 1, Children ages 6 to 9 are invited to experiment, explore and build

Wednesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Jan. 10 to Feb. 7, Art Smart for Ages 8 to 12. Have fun exploring different art styles and techniques.

Saturdays from 2 to 3 p.m., Jan. 13 to Feb. 10, Art Smart Jr. for Ages 5 to 7.

See mohrlibrary.org or call 401-231-4980 to register.

Registration is ongoing for a variety of programs and events at the Mohr Library, 1 Memorial Ave, Johnston.

The Library offers help with technology, information, and finding books and media. They have fax service, self-service copying and public computers, and a Notary Public most evenings (call ahead to confirm). You can reserve quiet rooms and meeting space.

Drawing for adults will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursdays.

The Knitting and Crochet Group meets Fridays at 10 a.m.

Activities for middle-school and high-school age kids will be offered many afternoons. Kids should talk with our Young Adult Librarian, Marissa, for more information.

The Children's Library always has drop-in, self-directed activities for kids and families like crafts and scavenger hunts.

There is an ongoing book sale in the lower level, whenever we are open.

Library hours are Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Johnston Senior Center Highlights

From the Staff

Everyone is happy that the Bingo is back. We all missed everyone.

We are putting together more activities for the coming months ahead.

Our Senior Center gives our all to make our members feel welcome and enjoy the time they spend here.

Along with the activities, Lunch is served daily. Bingo is every Thursday and Friday at 2 p.m.

Weekly Events

- Monday — Arts and Crafts
- Monday & Wednesday — Hi Lo Jack
- Tuesday — Quilting
- Wednesday — Poker
- Thursday — Mar Jong
- Thursday & Friday — Bingo

Upcoming Trips

- Monday, Jan. 8, 10 a.m., Newport shopping & lunch (\$5 per person)
- Wednesday, Jan. 16, 11 a.m., Movie & Lunch, (\$10 per person TBA)
- Wednesday, Jan. 31, 11:30 a.m., Mystery Lunch, (\$10 per person)
- Monday, Feb. 5, Lunch & Shopping at Warwick Mall, 11 a.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 13, Decorating for Valentines Day, 10 a.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 14, Valentines Day Lunch & Party, 11:15 a.m.

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# SELECT SOPRANO



**REPRESENTING FERRI:** Eighth grade high honor roll student and Vice-President of Student Council at Ferri Middle School, Brianna Lapati, will be representing Ferri and Johnston as a member of RIMEA for the Rhode Island JATC (Junior All-State Treble Chorus) ensemble as a Soprano. She auditioned with students from all over the state at Ponaganset High School in Scituate on Nov. 18 and was the only student selected from Johnston for the Junior All-State chorus. She is also a member of Ferri's Select Chorus class, where students needed to audition to be added to this course and perform separately at school concerts. Brianna has been rehearsing after school weekly with Ferri's Chorus teacher, Mr. Tom Conlon, who has been preparing her for this wonderful experience. She will also be rehearsing for many hours with RIMEA in March. Brianna will perform with the RIMEA JATC at a concert at The VETS in Providence on March 24. (Photos courtesy Maryanna Lapati)



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**BASKET HELPERS:** At Our Lady of Grace Church, Father Fr. Peter Gower, David Venditelli, Lisa Ricci and Carla Spremulli get the gift baskets ready. (Photos courtesy Louis Spremulli)

# Spirit of Hope & Pannese Society donate 40 holiday gift baskets

By Sun Rise Staff Reports

Leading up to the holidays, Spirit of Hope and the Pannese Society joined forces and gave two Johnston churches a truckload of gift baskets. With this joint venture, 40 Thanksgiving baskets were made up with a value of \$40 each, according to Spirit of Hope Founder Louis J. Spremulli. Each basket contained stuffing, cranberry sauce, cornbread, a 5 lb. bag of potatoes, fresh carrots, brown gravy, sweet potatoes, canned vegetables, apple pie, chocolate, and gift cards. Two Johnston churches received the baskets, St. Robert Bellarmine and Our Lady of Grace. "This donation required a lot of time, hard work, shopping and transporting materials," according to Spremulli. "We had a crew of about 10 volunteers working on completing this project. They were very precise workers and don't get in their way when they are decorating. This was not just ... about the content, but they were concerned about the presentation." Both organizations were grateful for those who contributed to the effort — individuals and local business-

es. "We thank all our donors," Spremulli said. "Especially Stop and Shop with 40 gift cards, the Pannese Society also gave 40 gift cards as well for the turkeys." Spirit of Hope was recently recognized by the Diocese of Providence's Secretary of RI Charities as a worthy non-profit supporting those in need, according to Spremulli. "This is from a lot of hard work and dedication from our volunteers, presentations and support to those in need," he said. Spemulli said one local legislator deserved special recognition. "One person who should be acknowledged for a special delivery is Rep. Edward Cardillo Jr. for his donation of 30 winter new jackets for the homeless," Spremulli said. "We all were ecstatic." Spremulli's still trying to get the word out about his fairly young organization, Spirit of Hope. "It seems that many Johnston residents are still unaware of who we are and what we do," he said. "Please go to our website at www.spiritofhoperi.org and see what we do."



**HOLIDAY SPIRIT:** At St. Robert Bellarmine Church, Frank Di Maio, David Gonzales, Donald Innocenti, Dan Klien, Phil Caputo, Al Guertin, Henry Marques, Rosemarie Boreugasser, Bob Casali, Bill Holtmann, Bob Richard, Ken Renaud, Tom Colantonio, Fr. Richard Narciso & Carla Spremulli help in the effort.

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**LAYLA'S DREAM:** The R.I. State Constable annual toy drive was a huge success this year. The toys are donated to children in need statewide, in memory of Layla's Dream, a program created to bring joy and hope to those going through difficult times at Hasbro Children's Hospital. Pictured from left is Constable Kenneth Norigian, President, Father Gower, Our Lady of Grace Church, Rep. Deborah Fellela, Johnston, Constable George Clark, Chairman. (Photo courtesy George Clark)

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*“Why would they want to be under the microscope? If it was an 87% Republican majority, I wouldn’t want to be under it — it’s human nature. But good policy and politics don’t factor that.”*

– House Minority Leader Mike Chippendale, a Foster Republican

**IG**  
(Continued from page 1)

Audit, which looks into the financial affairs and efficiency of executive offices and agencies. The General Assembly also has its own oversight committees.

But House Minority Leader Mike Chippendale, a Foster Republican, said those offices have no independence. He noted that the Auditor General serves under the Joint Committee on Legislative Services — which is run by General Assembly leaders.

“We need someone who is not beholden to the Legislature,” Chippendale said.

Powers explained that the Inspector General would conduct investigations, audits, and evaluations of all government programs. The office would also review state contracts and act as a channel for whistleblowers.

“We pave the way for an era where transparency is not a buzzword, but a lived-in reality” Powers said.

Such independent offices exist in Washington D.C. and 34 states, including Connecticut and Massachusetts.

“It’s certainly not a novel idea,” Chippendale said.

Chippendale said the initiative to create an independent inspector general’s office tends to get overshadowed by other legislation and news. But GOP leaders are hopeful outrage over the sudden closure of the four westbound lanes of I-195 on the Washington Bridge last month will help push the proposal out of committee this year.

Chippendale said at the press conference that an inspector general could have immediately looked into the events surrounding the closure. The Rhode Island Department of Administration announced on Dec. 18 that it would procure a contractor to provide independent oversight and review for the Department of Transportation.

Chippendale said he could remember only one instance when a legislative oversight committee used its subpoena powers: in 2015 to compel former Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling to testify during a probe of the state’s \$75 million deal with now defunct 38 Studios.

“And we were not allowed to ask questions,” Chippendale said.

The office has an estimated price tag of \$1.5 million. Senate Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz, a North Smithfield Republican, suggested the state departments could trim their budgets to pay for it.

She also floated the idea that the state cut funding from the lieutenant governor’s office — which has a budget of roughly \$1.4 million.

“I’m not sure what services other than constituent services they provide — it’s not \$1.5 million,” de la Cruz said.

Looking at you, lieutenant governor Chippendale told Rhode Island Cur-

rent he was also open to taking money from the lieutenant governor’s budget.

A spokesman for the lieutenant governor’s office expressed disappointment that the GOP would consider cuts to its budget, pointing out Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos’ initiatives for military members and the state’s Small Business Advocacy Council.

“Lt. Gov. Matos holds both of these legislators in high esteem and has worked with them on the Long Term Care Coordinating Council, another key duty of her office,” spokesman David Folcarelli said. “She welcomes them to reach out to our office if they need further information about the work we do for Rhode Islanders or the work of our policy councils, especially the LTCCC’s report on meeting the housing needs of older adults and individuals with chronic disabilities and illnesses.”

De La Cruz said Republicans will spearhead the proposal this session, but anticipates bipartisan support.

No Democrats attended Tuesday’s press conference. Chippendale told Rhode Island Current he spoke with some of his Democratic colleagues about this latest push over the fall. He did not name anyone in particular.

The GOP’s call for an Inspector General has been in the works for decades. The measure was first introduced in the General Assembly by Democrat Rep. Mike Pisaturo in 2002 and became a perennial proposal starting in 2004.

Each bill was held in committee. Chippendale and de la Cruz blamed the Democratic party’s supermajority in the General Assembly for preventing the legislation from moving forward.

“Why would they want to be under the microscope?” Chippendale said. “If it was an 87% Republican majority, I wouldn’t want to be under it — it’s human nature. But good policy and politics don’t factor that.”

House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi said in a statement “this is a perennial request and when it is introduced, it will be sent to the appropriate committee and a full public hearing will be held.”

“Prior testimony has shown that there is a significant cost to this legislation,” Shekarchi added.

Senate President Dominick Ruggerio said his chamber will take a similar approach.

“If legislation to create an office of inspector general is introduced, it will undergo the usual thorough and public committee review process,” Ruggerio said in a statement.

Even if things don’t go forward this year, Chippendale said the creation of an Office of Inspector General is likely to be an early priority in 2025.

“Good ideas don’t always pass on the first go around,” Chippendale said.

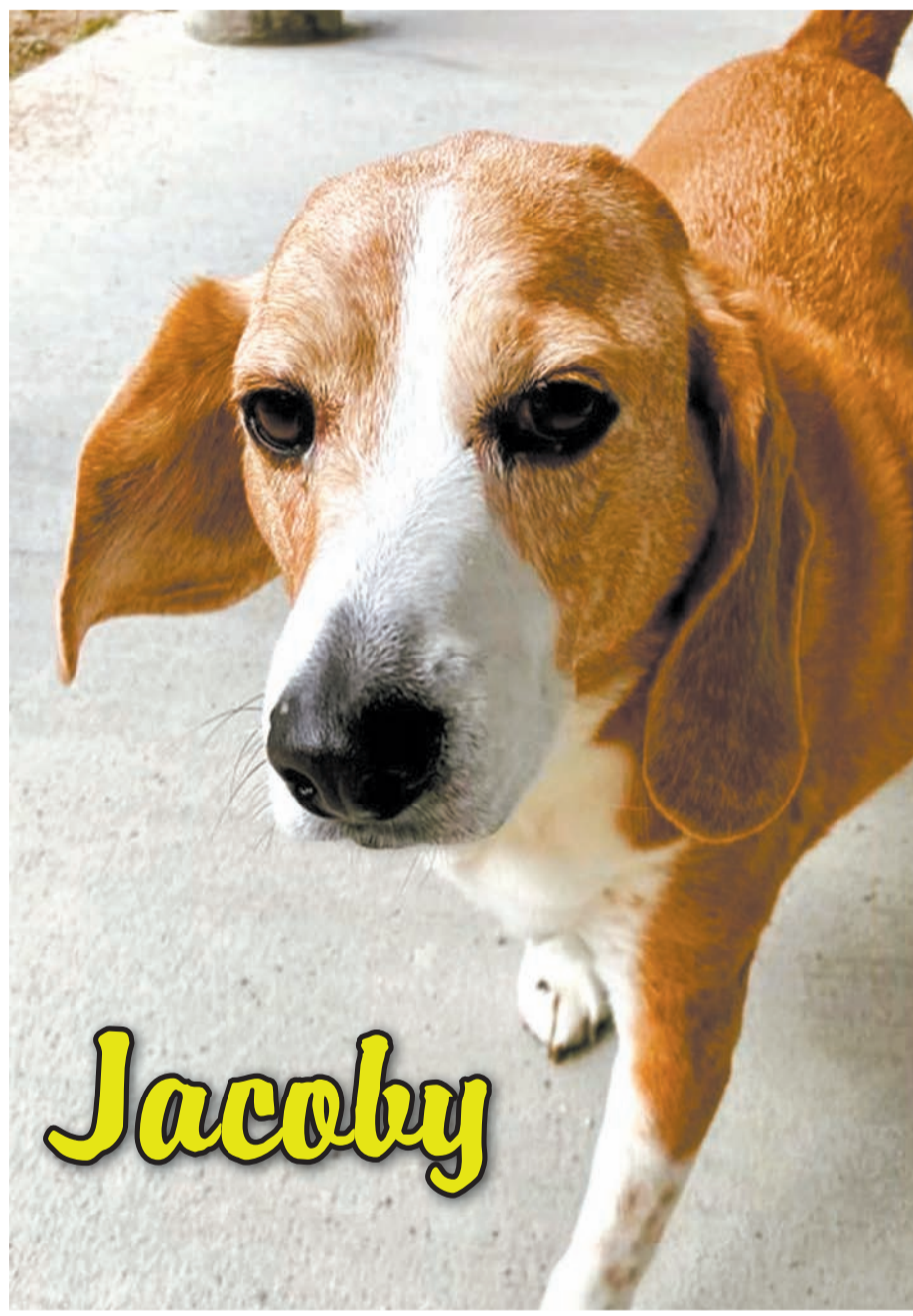
**Editor’s Note:** Christopher Shea covers politics, the criminal justice system and transportation for the Rhode Island Current. More stories from the non-profit state news organization can be found at their website, [rhodeislandcurrent.com](http://rhodeislandcurrent.com).

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By Karen Kalunian

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Photo credit: Burrville Animal Control

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# Sports

## Sun Rise Sports Awards

Celebrating the New Year by honoring the best of 2023

### Co-Boys Teams of the Year: Basketball, Volleyball

The basketball Panthers claimed their first championship in more than two decades with a thrilling comeback win over Middletown in the championship game. Johnston finished 14-1 and in first place heading into the playoffs and kept that momentum until it hoisted the championship plaque. Derek Salvatore and Anthony Corsinetti proved to be the division's best back court as both received Division II First Team honors. Neri Vasquez was a difference maker up front and went on to be named to the All-League second team. Guys like Michael Carlino and Camani Batista also made big impacts as the season wore on to give Johnston one of the state's deepest lineups.

The defending champion volleyball team felt that not only could it be as good as it was in 2022, but better. Sure enough, the Panthers rolled to a perfect season to win its second straight title, only dropping two sets all season long including the playoffs. Yondel Gonzalez and Josh Philbrick were named to the Division III First Team, while Jacob Muller was named to the second team. Coach Greta Lalli was named the Division III Coach of the Year.

Awards continue to page 13



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## Girls Team of the Year: Soccer

The Johnston girls soccer program is officially back. After a down few seasons, the Panthers would find a home in Division IV in 2022 and reach the semifinals after clinching the top seed. The Lady Panthers returned to the pitch hungry in 2023 and would find more success, reaching the finals. Alexia DiLorenzo and Kaylee Poole were arguably the division's best 1-2 punch on offense while Ava Waterman was elite in the net. Although Johnston will be graduating a handful of key players, there is still plenty returning to keep the Panthers among the division's contenders.



## Boy Athlete of the Year: Derek Salvatore

Derek Salvatore is the Johnston Sun Rise's Boy Athlete of the Year for the second straight season. As captain of the basketball team last season, Salvatore proved to be the team's unquestioned leader as he led the Panthers to their first state championship in more than two decades. Salvatore had a championship performance for the ages, finishing with 20 second half points (24 overall) to erase an 8-point deficit and fuel the historic comeback. Salvatore also joined the school's 1,000-point club during the regular season and is currently playing for St. Joe's in Maine. Salvatore then had a nice senior season on the baseball diamond, where he finished with Division II First Team honors.

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## Girl Athlete of the Year: Alexia DiLorenzo

Alexia DiLorenzo was an elite two-sport athlete for Johnston in softball and soccer. On the diamond, DiLorenzo was vital to the Panthers' return to the postseason as she batted .317 and was named to the Division II Third Team at the end of the spring. DiLorenzo was even more impressive on the soccer field this past fall as she led the Panthers with a whopping 20 goals while guiding the team to the championship clash at Rhode Island College.



Alexia DiLorenzo. (Photo by Leo van Dijk/rhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

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*Holiday hoops*

Johnston Youth Basketball in association with the Rhode Island Youth Basketball Association hosted its annual youth tournament last week, hosting 130 teams from across Rhode Island ranging from third grade players to eighth grade. The tournament hosted over 100 games in just two days, using the courts at the high school, rec center and Rainone Gym. Seven teams from Johnston competed, and the seventh grade girls team (above) would win their division. Members of the team included: Caylee Allen, Gianna Amore. Asst. Coach Isreal Solano,, Madeline Ritch, Janae Smith, Janyla Cabba, Daylin Allen, Head Coach David Allen, Mia Solano, Aubrey Watkins, Asst. Coach Drew Watkins. *(Submitted photos)*

*Boy Coach of the Year:  
Mike Bedrosian, Basketball*

In his second year at the helm, Mike Bedrosian proved to be one of the state's best young coaches as he guided the Panthers to their first basketball championship since 1996. Johnston finished the regular season with a 14-1 record which was good for first place, then would roll in the playoffs and complete a comeback win in the championship game against Middletown. Johnston had a talented roster heading into the season but flew under the radar. Bedrosian instilled confidence in his players and received immediate buy-in as the Panthers were undoubtedly the best team in Division II from start to finish. Bedrosian's leadership helped him be named coach of the year for the division. Johnston is on the prowl once again as the defending champs jumped out to a 3-0 record before the holiday break.



*Girl Coach of the Year:  
Toni Scavitti, Soccer*

The Lady Panthers had a program revival in 2022 when they reached the semifinals, much thanks to first-year coach Toni Scavitti's leadership. Johnston did itself one better in 2023, taking the next step to reach the championship game. Scavitti coached Johnston into being perhaps the most well-rounded team in the division with its big-time offensive duo in Alexia DiLorenzo and Kaylee Poole, while also boasting the division's best defense while getting another strong season from keeper Ava Waterman. Scavitti's emphasis on two-way play has allowed Johnston to be a powerhouse in DIV.



# Rhody Fly Rodders celebrate 60th anniversary

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

The Rhody Fly Rodders, the oldest chartered saltwater fly club in America, is holding a 60th Anniversary Banquet Celebration Saturday, Jan. 20, 1 p.m. at Wright's Farm Restaurant, 84 Inman Road, Harrisville, RI. The event is open to the public.

"This is a major milestone in our club's history. We welcome and would be honored to have as many past presidents, board members, inactive members as possible as well as those presently active in the club. It was their energy and foresight in the beginning that helped the club grow and prosper to where it is today," said Capt. Ray Stachelek, President of the Rhody Fly Rodders. "Sixty years is a long time and when you think about the technological advances during this period it is amazing from the Chase Bobbin Holder, to rotary vises, to light cure adhesives, and the progression of the fly rod from bamboo, fiberglass, to the current state of the art graphite."

Capt. Stachelek said there will be lots to see and do at the celebration. For information and tickets contact Capt. Ray Stachelek at [www.cas-taflycharters.com](http://www.cas-taflycharters.com) or 401.884.379.

## Marlborough Fly Fishing Show this week

The Marlborough Fly Fishing Show is this week, Jan. 5-7, 2024 at the Royal Plaza Hotel & Trade Center, 181 Boston Post Road West, Marlborough, MA. This is the first of a series of seven Fly Fishing Shows of its type across the country.

See all that is new for 2024 at the largest fly fishing event in New England including new exhibitors, speakers, topics, and new fresh and saltwater learning opportunities for all. Highlights include Stillwater programs with Phil Rowley; casting demos and instruction with George Daniel, Landon Mayer, Sheila Hassan and more; fly tying with Tim Flagler, Joe Cordeiro, Ed Engle and others; expanded selection of classes with the experts where you can get one-on-one time with the pros; featured seminars by Jeff Currier, Bob Mallard, Alan Caolo; as well as new rods, reels, lines, accessories, clothing, waders, boots, books, DVDs and anything else you may want to purchase.

Cash only at the gate, however tickets can be purchased in advance online. One Day adult pass is \$18, two-day pass \$28 and a three day pass is \$38. Children 5 years old and under admitted free, 6 to 12 year olds \$5.

For information, hours and to by tickets online visit [www.flyfishing-show.com](http://www.flyfishing-show.com).

## New England Saltwater Fishing Show March 8-10

The New England Saltwater Fishing Show is Friday, March 8 to Sunday, March 10 at the Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence, RI. If you like to fish on the salt you are in for a big treat. The show is the largest saltwater fishing show of its type in the Northeast. The Show features tackle, rods, reels, lures, electronics, charter guides, boats, engines, accessories, clothing and much more. Over 300 fishing related manufactures are expected to be represented at the show.

"From what we hear so far you won't want to miss the show specials offered by exhibitors and the great 'how to' seminars being offered by some of our areas top fishers," said

Scott Travers, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association, Show sponsors. "Learn strategies and tactics to target species such as striped bass, summer flounder, tautog and a host of others,"

For information on the show or how to reserve a booth at the show as an exhibitor contact Scott Travers at [travers@risaa.org](mailto:travers@risaa.org) or 401 500-2634.

## Cape Cod Bay Seasonal Right Whale Management Area in Effect Jan. 1-May 15, 2024

NOAA Fisheries announced last week the annual opening of a Seasonal Management Area (SMA) in Cape Cod Bay to protect North Atlantic right whales starting on January 1, 2024.

All vessels 65 feet or longer must travel at 10 knots or less in this area to reduce the threat of vessel collisions with these endangered whales. The Cape Cod Bay SMA is in effect through May 15, 2024.

Because vessels of all sizes can strike and injure a right whale, NOAA Fisheries also encourages vessels less than 65 feet in length to slow down to 10 knots or less within active SMAs.

The Cape Cod Bay SMA includes all waters of Cape Cod Bay with Northern Boundary of 42°04'56.5"N, 070°12'W to 42°12'N, 070°12'W then due west back to shore.

All boaters from Maine to Virginia, or interested parties, can sign up for email or text notifications about the latest Right Whale Slow Zones at NOAA Fisheries - Stay up to date with Right Whale Slow Zone notifications ([govdelivery.com](http://govdelivery.com)). You can also follow NOAA Fisheries on Facebook (@NOAAFisheriesNEMA) and Twitter (@NOAAFish\_GARFO) for announcements.

## Where's the bite?

Freshwater fishing in stocked ponds for trout and salmon continues to be very good with a decent largemouth and smallmouth bass bite. For a complete list of trout stocked ponds in Massachusetts visit Mass Wildlife at Trout stocking report | [Mass.gov](http://Mass.gov) and in Rhode Island visit [www.dem.ri.gov/fishing](http://www.dem.ri.gov/fishing), or call 401-789-0281 or 401-539-0019 for more information on trout stocking.

Saltwater. The tautog and black sea bass seasons closed Dec. 31. Anglers have now turned their attention to cod fishing, striped bass fishing in hold over areas with many switching off to fresh water fishing. For the past couple of years striped bass fishing in salt ponds has been outstanding with anglers catching fish to 35 inches, most striped bass hold overs are small school size bass.

If you want to try your hand at cod fishing call ahead to make a party boat reservation, vessels generally sail between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. and return in the afternoon. Visit [www.islandcurrent.com](http://www.islandcurrent.com) and [www.francesfleet.com](http://www.francesfleet.com). Full day rates for vessels are generally \$130 to \$135 per adult and around \$80 for those under 12 years old.

Dave Monti holds a captain's license and charter fishing license. He serves on a variety of boards and commissions and has a consulting business focusing on clean oceans, habitat preservation, conservation, renewable energy, and fisheries related issues and clients. Forward fishing news and photos to [dmontifish@verison.net](mailto:dmontifish@verison.net) or visit [www.noflukefishing.com](http://www.noflukefishing.com).



FISHING SHOWS: The New England Saltwater Fishing Show is March 8-10 at the RI Convention Center. The Marlborough Fly Fishing Show is this weekend.

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## Smart Souvenir Shopping



**By Travis Landry**  
Auctioneer & Specialist  
Bruneau & Co. Auctioneers  
Cranston, RI

T-shirts, magnets, hats, and shot glasses are all staple bring-backs, but while probably brightly colored and boasting the name of the place, it is unlikely they were truly made in that location. Closer inspection will likely reveal those items were made in Chinese factories. If you want to bring home souvenirs with actual cultural value and perhaps even future cash value, skip the gimmicky stuff and check for labels or maker's marks!

As an example, I refer back mine and Ashle's recent trip to Italy. In Venice "Murano" glass is all the rage, and the most commonly seen thing in every gift shop. The scary part is a large portion of the "Murano" glass you see isn't even made on the island of Murano; It is a cheap imported version designed to imitate Murano glass. Don't fall into this tourist trap! If



you see the same sculpture thirty-seven times in different stores, it's not the unique or valuable souvenir you're looking for.

The key to successful shopping while traveling is to find the real deal. Find a local gallery or artist's studio where you can score a true piece of local culture. If you are walking down a street lined with gift shop after gift shop you are not in the right place. Venture away from the port and main streets to the less trafficked areas where local artisans are more likely to run their shops. You might even get to watch the craftsmen while they work. That's how Ashle and I ended up coming home with the awesome Italian Massimo Lunardon alien we now have on our mantel instead of a piece of wannabe Murano art glass!

Don't forget supporting local artisans supports local economies. If you truly appreciate the place you are visiting, shop locally! Avoiding cheap imports will keep the traditional and cultural manufacturing methods alive for future generations to enjoy on future vacations. It is this thought process that will also help you find an authentic travel keepsake for your family's collection... and not something I'll have to someday tell your grandchildren is just a cheap knickknack!



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# Rhody Health & Wellness

## How Do I Know if My Teen is Depressed?



**M**ental health-related disorders consist of many different symptoms, signs, and treatment options. It can be difficult to talk about uncomfortable emotions, thoughts, or behaviors at *any* age, especially as a teen.

As many parents may know, the teenage years bring about changes in physical appearance, attitude, and relationships. It's not uncommon to ask yourself "What is wrong with my teen? Is this 'normal' behavior?" The truth is, between the ages of 13-17, "normal" is irrelevant. When it comes to adolescent behavior, it's important to try and understand:

- Why is it happening?
- Where is it coming from?
- What could be causing it?

Chances are, the answer isn't simple. Even if it was, that doesn't mean your teen is willing to admit it. For those of you who have been brave enough to ask, "Are you okay?" "How was school?" "How are you doing?" - you may have been on the receiving end of a silent, cold, or sassy response. So, what next?

### Struggles of the Average Teen

To better understand your teen, you must first consider the many things they may be up against each day:

Puberty	Relationship issues
Schoolwork overload	Lack of sleep
Bullying	Poor appetite
Extra-curricular activity fatigue	Feeling lonely
Social media	Fitting in
Body image concerns	Hopelessness
Comparing themselves to others	Academic challenges

Some of these factors, along with many more, can impact a teen's day-to-day mood, but there are signs and symptoms that there may be something more serious going on.

### Signs and Symptoms of Depression in Teens

It is important to remember that depression does not discriminate, and it can show up differently for everyone. Long-term sadness, low energy, or isolation are some but not the only signs of depression. In fact, there are many warning

## Staying Healthy



by **ARIANA VERDUCCI**  
PROGRAM THERAPIST  
ADOLESCENT PARTIAL PROGRAM, BUTLER HOSPITAL

signs to consider.

Potential changes or signs you may notice if your teen is struggling include, but are not limited to:

- Ignoring friends, canceling plans
- Ignoring texts, calls, or FaceTimes
- Spending more time in their room or out of the house
- Not wanting to participate in social activities or sports
- Increased irritability, annoyance, or frustration
- Falling behind on schoolwork or missing school entirely
- Declining grades
- Increased arguments at home or with friends
- Getting in trouble at school or work
- Falling behind on chores or other responsibilities
- Change in eating patterns, sleep routine, or energy
- Shutting down easily
- Lashing out (yelling, hitting, throwing)
- Substance use of any kind
- Making statements about wanting to die
- Making threats about hurting themselves or killing themselves

While the above signs and symptoms may indicate depression or anxiety for some teens, it is important to note that each example may be of concern if it is different from your child's baseline (or typical/average way of existing).

For example:

- A teen who regularly excels in school but is suddenly failing may be a sign of something more.
- A teen who has not typically excelled in school and who has grades following the normal pattern may or may not be a concern.

### Addressing Teen Depression

It can be scary to think your teen might be struggling. How-

ever, it's important to take the appropriate actions to ensure things aren't inadvertently overlooked. Starting conversations with your teen can be difficult but these conversations are crucial.

If you worry your teen is experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety and you recognize changes from their typical behavior, ask them about it. By asking, it lets your teen know you care (even if the response is vague or less than welcoming). If they don't share and open fully with you, know that this is common and expected. Don't take it personally or push for more information.

Let your teen know you are willing to find them someone to speak with if they are not comfortable speaking with you. Ensure them that help is available and that you are concerned they might be going through something alone. Ask them to promise that if something is up and it gets worse, they will approach you to say they need help. Let them know that if/when that happens, you will respect their privacy and act quickly to get them help without asking more questions (and hold yourself to this commitment).

### Managing Your Reaction

Managing your own emotions or reactions during a conversation about your teen's mental health can also be difficult, but it is highly important. It is not beneficial to share with your teen any negative feelings you have about their unwillingness to talk to you or fears you have if they are indeed depressed or anxious. Seek support for yourself so you can work this out away from your teen and remain open/neutral/supportive/validating in front of your teen.

### Seeking Help for Your Teen

With the uptick in mental health concerns for teens across the country, it can be difficult to find a therapist or doctor in a timely manner. It can require a lot of work on the phone to find the right level of care and fit.

At Butler Hospital, however, there is a 24/7 call intake line, 1-844-401-0111, where a clinician can assist you in determining the next best step for your teen within one brief phone call. They will be sure you understand your options and if you and your teen are ready, they will assist you in putting the recommended plan in motion.

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