

## Rhode Island's biggest revolving door?

### J.R. Vinagro paid RIRRC \$37.3M during ex-landfill boss's tenure, then hired him as their CEO

By RORY SCHULER

A Johnston hauling company paid Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) more than \$37 million since 2017, under the landfill's former boss, according to financial data released following a Beacon Communications public records request.

Then J.R. Vinagro Corp. poached the quasi-public state agency's executive director as its new CEO.

Beacon Communications (publisher of the Johnston Sun Rise, Warwick Beacon and Cranston Herald) submitted a formal public records request to RIRRC for "documentation linked to any payments from J.R. Vinagro Corporation to RIRRC during the tenure of former Executive Director Joseph Reposa."

Beacon Communications (via the Johnston Sun Rise) has submitted more than a dozen requests since Reposa resigned from his job in December and immediately went to work for Vinagro.



**FROM THE AIR:** These images of the vicinity surrounding RIRRC's Central Landfill and Material Recycling Facility in Johnston were captured last year by drones piloted by Trevor Bryan, an FAA Licensed and insured drone pilot, the owner and operator of New England Aerial Services. (Photos by New England Aerial Services)

LANDFILL - PAGE 8

## FEMA disaster center opens



**FEMA ARRIVES:** Above, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has opened a disaster recovery center (DRC) in the Johnston Senior Center at 1291 Hartford Ave. The Johnston DRC hours of operation: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and closed on Sunday. (Johnston Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)

## Four months after September storms, help has arrived

By RORY SCHULER

Too little too late or better late than never?

Four months later and at least two subsequent significant flood events since September's soaking storms, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set up a disaster recovery center (DRC) in the Johnston Senior Center.

"I suspect the delay was with how long it took for President (Joe) Biden to sign off on approving the disaster declaration," Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. said Tuesday morning. "This

is my first disaster declaration I've dealt with, so I'm not sure how long it typically takes. I believe the news broke Jan. 7 that Biden approved the request for the September flooding and the center was set up just two weeks after that."

FEMA staffers and the Small Business Administration (SBA) have set up the DRC in a room to the left of the Hartford Avenue senior activity hub entrance.

Any property owners in the state, business or private residents, who were "affected by the severe weather that took place from Sept. 10-13, 2023," can stop by the DRC in Johnston, or a second location in Cumberland.

"They liked Johnston because of its central location," said Senior Center Executive Director Richard DeFino Jr. "This is a comfortable venue for people to be received and serviced, six days a week. They've been starting early in the morning and leaving in the evening around 6:30 p.m. Throughout the day, FEMA and SBA reps (have been) meeting with individuals who have documented losses in the storm and the weather conditions that took place back in September."

FEMA - PAGE 9





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**POTW:** This week's Panther of the Week is Angel Guzman. Angel is a senior at Johnston High and was nominated by his English teacher Ms. Laurie Whitman. Ms. Whitman said "Angel epitomizes the best qualities of our JHS students: academically curious, unerringly respectful, and consistently hardworking. Angel values his educational opportunities and will, undoubtedly, continue to be successful in all of his future endeavors." (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.




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# ‘Basic needs of seniors back then are still critical needs today’

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

The Johnston Senior Center Spotlight this week shines on Georgette DiDomenico, who has been a member here for the last four years.

Early on in life, as a young adult, Georgette began working for a federally funded program, and was placed at the Nickerson House Community Center in the Olneyville/Manton section of Providence. As an Outreach Worker, she was responsible for identifying seniors in the community, who were in need of social services.

She encountered many older adults in need of basic necessities such as food, heating assistance, and housing. Many of the elderly at that time, and in that community, were in need of services, and she made sure they were received.

Georgette also helped write proposals for funding additional programs and resources in the community, all aimed at improving the lives of older adults. In many ways, the services offered to seniors in community centers in those early days, thru time, evolved into the senior centers of today.

The basic needs of seniors back then are still critical needs today. Georgette currently reaps some of those benefits she worked hard to identify and fund back then.

She recognizes the need for older adults to stay physically and mentally engaged. She comes to the JSC around four times per week where she enjoys exercise class and playing the game of Mar Jon. She enjoys reading, socializing, and a weekly game of golf.

Georgette is certainly someone whose opinion is well respected and has a deep understanding and commitment to enriching the lives of older adults.

**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 Spotlight,” submitted by the senior center.

## Johnston Senior Center Highlights

### From the Staff

Our Director and Staff would like to wish everyone a very happy and healthy New Year.

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.

We are putting together more activities for the coming months ahead. Looking forward to seeing you there!

On Tuesday, Feb. 13, from 1 to 3 p.m., the Johnston Senior Center will hold a Ballroom Social Dance.

### Weekly Events

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

### Upcoming Trips

- 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.
- Monday, Feb. 26, Newport, Lunch & Shopping, 10:30 a.m. (\$5 per person)



# Senior ‘Spotlite’

**REACHING OUT:** This week, the Johnston Senior Center Spotlight shines on Georgette DiDomenico, who formerly worked as an Outreach Worker, helping to identify seniors in the community, who were in need of social services. Now, as a senior, she’s enjoying a few of the resources available in Johnston. (Photo courtesy Richard J. DelFino Jr.)

## Morgan Rehab gifts Senior Center a new TV

### Sun Rise Staff Reports

The Johnston Senior Center recently received a donation of a TV Monitor from the Morgan Rehabilitation and Health Center of Johnston.

Elaine Bigos-Davis, the Center's Director of Admissions, presented the donation last week. The monitor will be used to broadcast a channel dedicated to the Johnston Senior Center, which will feature the various upcoming events scheduled at the JSC.

A partnership with Morgan will also feature education series and other prizes for various events held at the Center.

“This is one of the first corporate sponsors the JSC is now soliciting to host various presentations and other events here at the JSC,” said senior center executive director Richard DelFino Jr.



**NEW TV:** Robert Piscione, Chairman of the Johnston Senior Center Advisory Board, accepted a donation of a Television Monitor from Elaine Bigos-Davis, Admissions Director of the Morgan Rehabilitation and Health Center of Johnston. (Submitted photo)



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# CALENDAR RAFFLE

# Have you caught 'February Fever'?

By PETE FONTAINE

There are calendar raffles, and then there is the Johnston School Music Association (JSMA) calendar raffle that this year could well be named a "bonus bonanza," but instead has been called "February Fever."

Beginning on Thursday, Feb. 1, the JMCA Calendar Raffle will begin and feature upwards of \$4,000 in prizes during the month including 20 bonus drawings, eight golf packages and gift certificates to some of Rhode Island's top restaurants. "We are really proud of the calendar raffle, and we are thankful for the generous support from everyone in and around our community," said Ron Lamoureux, who chairs Johnston High School's national-award winning music department. "Everyone, from Mayor Joseph Polisena Jr. to our highly respected police and fire department unions, is part of this year's raffle."

The raffle has raised over \$20,000 in the last couple of years and has led to the JHS Music Department being able to purchase high quality instruments and equipment, helping the school's student musicians compete at the highest level at the state, regional and national levels.

Lamoureux continued, "It is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we are happy that it has been so successful. However, we need to keep going strong base the large amounts of money raised only represent one-sixth of what it takes for our groups to compete in the national festivals and represent roughly one eighth of our annual expenditures."

Likewise, the Calendar Raffle helps fund programs like the Rachel E. Carson Memorial Scholarship and transportation to and from major events.

The 2024 Calendar Raffle will offer at least \$100 per day to the winner and people may enter as many times as they'd like. Also, there will be eight \$100 cash prizes, and as noted, golf at eight venues in the state. If a winner doesn't want the golf package for four, he or she will receive \$100 cash.

Tickets are only \$10 per person and as Lamoureux said "you can win multiple times and are also eligible for all the 15 bonus prizes that are valued between \$25 and \$50."

Tickets are available at Johnston High School or by emailing rlamoureux@johnstonschools.org.



**SALES STAFF:** Members of the JHS Tri-M Music Honor Society are holding calendar raffle cards that are priced at \$10 each and have prizes worth more than \$4,000. The officers are: David Pagliarini, secretary; Shylah Soto, historian; Eliyanha Negron, president; Trinity Blondin, vice president; and Johnthan Guilmette, treasurer. (Courtesy photo)

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# NORTH WEST LINKS 2024



**CARING CAST:** Among those people who work in the elder care industry who attended last week's North West Links meeting are, from left: Mark Berger, Bethany Burke, Melissa Mitchell and Nick Pacheco. (Sun Rise photos by Pete Fontaine)

## 'Networking' was on the menu during Bridge at Cherry Hill's latest breakfast event

By PETE FONTAINE

There was networking at its best last Thursday morning courtesy of host The Bridge at Cherry Hill and North West Links.

Some three dozen professionals, who work in the elder care industry at places like assisted living and nursing home facilities in the state, enjoyed "talking shop" and explaining various phases of their respective agencies during a fun-filled and informative meeting in Johnston.

The monthly breakfast meeting was highlighted by a bountiful buffet prepared by Marvin Carter, the executive chef at The Bridge at Cherry Hill.

"People were saying what a great turnout this was," offered Mike Mangasarian, the sales/community relations director at The Bridge who coordinated the event with North West Links Co-Chairwomen Jen Burns, from Anchor Bay at Pocasset, and Christine Soave-Crum, who owns and operated Gentry Moving and Storage in Cranston. "Many members emphasized that the food here is always fantastic."

Carter's creation for the meeting included cheese omelets, bacon, baked

ham, home fries, a special "Bridge McMuffin," pancakes, fresh fruit, coffee and orange juice.

For about two hours people sat at tables inside The Bridge's sitting room enjoying the fine food, classic camaraderie and exchanging business cards while telling Mangasarian to "please make sure you add me to the list for all of North West Links upcoming events."

Likewise, people like Debra Demar, a community liaison and technician for Whitecross Pharmacy talked about the North Providence based company benefits and Amy Gower, Director of Community Relations for All-American Assisted Living in Warwick extended an invitation to North West members to attend an upcoming special social event.

"Let's build memories together at our Hard Hat Party," read a line on the invitation Gower passed out to members. "Please join us for an evening of laughter, good company and the joy of our community evolve and learn more about expanding our expertise in memory care."

The next event will be on Wednesday, Jan. 31 from 4 to 6 p.m. and people should call 401-889-5905 by Jan. 16 to register.



**LINKED LEADERS:** Maryann Grace (second left), the executive director at The Bridge at Cherry Hill, is joined by North West Links Co-Chairwoman Jen Burns, Debra Demar and Sales/Community Relations Director Mike Mangasarian at last week's breakfast buffet meeting in Johnston.



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## Invitation for Public Comments

The Community College of Rhode Island will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit on March 3–6, 2024, by a team representing the New England Commission of Higher Education (formerly the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, NEASC).

The New England Commission of Higher Education is a U.S. accrediting commission that provides institutional accreditation. Accreditation is voluntary and applies to the institution as a whole.

The Commission, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits approximately 220 institutions in the United States as well as American-style institutions overseas.

The Community College of Rhode Island has been accredited by the Commission since 1969 and was last reviewed in Spring 2014. Its accreditation by the Commission encompasses the entire institution.

For the past year and a half, the Community College of Rhode Island has been engaged in a process of self-study, addressing the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*. An evaluation team will visit the institution to gather evidence that the self-study is thorough and accurate. The team will recommend to the Commission a continuing status for the institution. Following a review process, the Commission itself will take the final action.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding the institution to:

Public Comment on the Community College of Rhode Island  
New England Commission of Higher Education  
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E-mail: info@neche.org

Public Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution. The Commission cannot settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether those involve faculty, students, administrators, or members of other groups. Comments will not be treated as confidential and must include the name, address, and telephone number of the person providing the comments.

**Public Comments must be received by March 6, 2024.**  
**The Commission cannot guarantee that comments received after that date will be considered.**



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# AG: Jury convicts Johnston man of 2021 murder

Sun Rise Staff Reports

Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Neronha announced recently that a Johnston man has been found guilty by a Providence County Superior Court jury of the murder of Mario Diaz, stemming from a shooting outside a Providence nightclub in 2021.

On Jan. 17, following the conclusion of a seven-day jury trial before Superior Court Justice Robert D. Krause, a jury found Miguel Lacourt, 38, of Johnston, guilty of one count of second-degree murder, one count of discharging a firearm while committing a crime of violence resulting in death, and one count of carrying a pistol without a license. The defendant was acquitted on the same counts for a second victim stemming from the same incident, Kenwins Pimentel, according to a press release from Neronha's office.

Lacourt is currently being held without bail at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI) pending a sentencing hearing to be scheduled later.

"These days, lives are lost to gun violence so often that it's difficult not to become numb to such tragedy," Neronha said. "While that response is understandable, we must continue to fight for commonsense gun laws and enforcement and avoid complacency. This victim, and countless others, would still be alive if not for the availability of firearms to those ready and willing to use them for violence. I hope this verdict provides some measure of peace for the victim's family. And thank you to the Providence Police for their consistent commitment to seeking justice for the victims of violent crime."

During the trial, the prosecution proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant shot and killed the victim following a dispute at a Providence lounge, according to the AG.

"In the early morning hours of Aug. 7, 2021, the defendant and two friends attended Fuego Lounge on West Friend-

ship Street in Providence," according to the press release. "Video surveillance from inside the lounge depicted the defendant as having long dreadlocks, two distinct tattoos, and wearing a red Cincinnati Reds hat and Motorsport sneakers. At some point, the defendant and his friend exit the nightclub and proceed to linger outside. Outside the nightclub, the defendant and another individual began an argument that then turned physical. The defendant attempted to restrain one of the people involved but got punched and kicked to the ground. The defendant eventually freed himself from the altercation and walked off towards Elmwood Avenue. Approximately 90 seconds later, the defendant returned with a gun and shot the victim."

According to the prosecution, "investigators recovered several items from the crime scene, including a strand of hair, a Cincinnati Reds hat and a Motorsport brand sneaker, items which were identified as belonging to the defendant in the video surveillance footage."

The investigators ultimately sent the items to the Forensic Biology Lab at the Rhode Island Department of Health, along with a known buccal swab of the defendant. The defendant's DNA profile matched the profiles extracted from all four items, according to the AG's office. Investigators also matched still frames from the video surveillance footage of the defendant's tattoos to booking photos of the defendant from a prior arrest.

"I commend the outstanding work conducted by Providence Police and the Attorney General's Office for bringing this defendant to justice," said Providence Police Colonel Oscar L. Perez Jr. "My heart goes out the family and friends of the victim and hope the outcome of this case gives them some semblance of peace."

Assistant Attorney General Scott Erickson, Special Assistant Attorney General Ariel Pittner and Providence Police Detective Mitchel Guerra led the prosecution and investigation of the case.

## POLICE LOG

### STOLEN GOODS

Around 10 a.m., Jan. 3, Johnston Police traveling east on Greenville Avenue spotted a 2011 Honda CRV with a malfunctioning brake light.

Johnston Police Patrolman Nicholas A. Crowe initiated a traffic stop.

Police identified the driver as Elkin Pico Leon, 34, of 316 Valley St., Apt. 3, Providence. A registration check revealed the tags were registered for a red Toyota and was reported stolen out of West Warwick, according to the arrest report.

Police said two plates were reported stolen, but only one was displayed on the vehicle.

Leon was arrested and charged with Receiving Stolen Goods (a misdemeanor), and received traffic citations for Operation of Vehicle When Registration is Canceled, Display of Plates and Stop Lamps Required. The vehicle was towed from the scene.

### SIMPLE ASSAULT

Around 8:40 p.m., Dec. 16, Johnston Police Patrolman Thomas Pederzani responded to a restaurant in town (name and address of business redacted from the publicly available incident report) to speak to the victim of an assault.

The victim told police that the suspect had "walked up behind him, grabbed his coat behind his neck and threw him and the chair backwards to the ground," according to the report narrative. "At that time a scuffle ensued and other customers at the restaurant came to the (the victim's) defense and prevented further injury."

The victim had a scratch on his neck and a "small open wound on his right elbow," according to police. Witnesses confirmed the assault.

The suspect was identified as Vincent R. Tallo, 35, of 12 Poppy Hill Drive, Johnston.

A witness also allegedly suffered minor injuries after she "attempted to separate Tallo from (the victim)," including minor bruises and scratches. The incident was captured on video surveillance.

"Upon viewing the footage I can clearly observe Tallo walk into the restaurant and confront (the victim) at which time he grabs him from his coat behind his neck and throws him to the ground," Pederzani wrote in the report.

The report was forwarded to the Johnston Police Detective Division for further investigation.

On Dec. 17, Johnston Police issued an arrest warrant charging Tallo with two counts of Simple Assault and one count of Disorderly Conduct (misdemeanors).

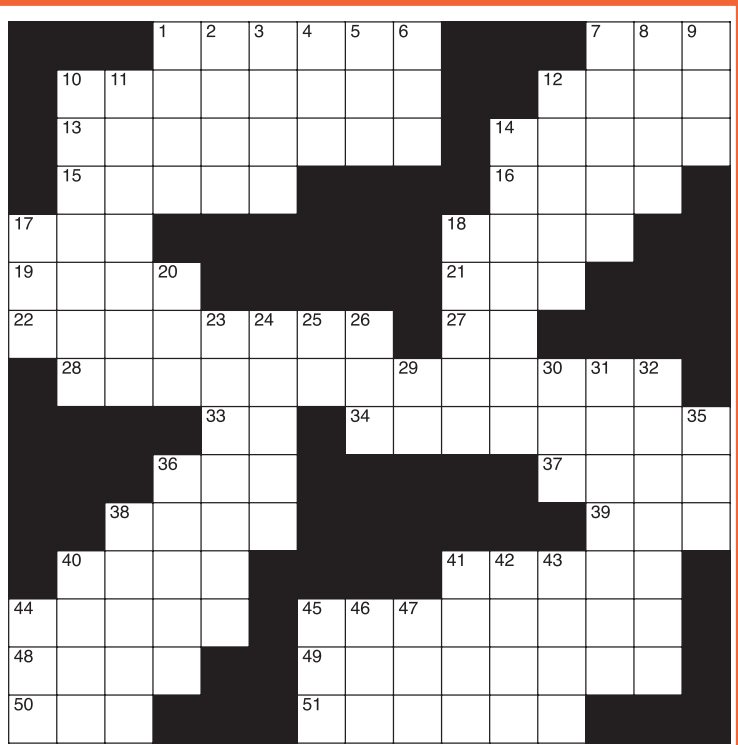
Around 9:05 a.m., Dec. 31, Johnston Police Patrolman Matthew A. Lonardo was patrolling Hartford Avenue when he spotted a silver Jeep with heavy window tint traveling west. He initiated a traffic stop and the driver pulled into the CVS parking lot at 1400 Hartford Ave.

The driver was identified as Tallo, who told police the window tint was on the vehicle when he bought it approximately a year earlier. A background check revealed Tallo's outstanding arrest warrant.

He was arrested and transported to Johnston Police Headquarters where he was processed and held pending arraignment. Tallo also received a traffic citation for Unlawful Install of Windshield and Window Sunscreen Film.

Tallo was arraigned by Rhode Island District Court Associate Judge Mary E. McCaffrey and released on \$3,000 personal recognizance, according to a Johnston Police supplementary report.

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Winged nut
7. \_\_\_ Humbug!
10. One who sets apart
12. Circle above a saint's head
13. Unpleasantly loud and harsh
14. Expressed pleasure
15. Feminine given name
16. Company of badgers
17. Popular Dodge pickup truck
18. Witty sayings
19. Leader
21. Autonomic nervous system
22. Premolar
27. Atomic #28
28. Holiday decorative item
33. Exclamation of surprise
34. Rusk or cracker
36. Returned material authorization (abbr.)
37. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language
38. Eat
39. Marxist economics theory (abbr.)

40. Ceases to exist
41. Male Arabic name
44. Series of ridges on an organ wall
45. Places where bees are kept
48. One-time Yankees sensation Kevin
49. Church office
50. Single lens reflex
51. Pieces of fibrous tissue

### CLUES DOWN

1. Classify
2. Dismounted
3. Produced
4. Consumed
5. Director Howard
6. The products of human creativity
7. Thai monetary units
8. Away from wind
9. Builder's trough
10. Relating to Islam
11. It can sometimes ache
12. Small quantities (Scot.)

14. Poisonous plant
17. Laugh at
18. Vogul
20. C. European river
23. Type of cat
24. Exclamation of disgust
25. Stephen King novel
26. Without armies
29. Expression of sympathy
30. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
31. Previously
32. Illegal drug
35. Kiloelectronvolt
36. Large, flightless birds
38. For smoking
40. Binary
41. Competition
42. Mark resembling an arrow
43. Containers
44. Root mean square (abbr.)
45. Commercials
46. I.M. \_\_\_, architect
47. 007's creator

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# Opinion

EDITORIAL

## McKee's FY25 budget a mixed bag

As sure as life, death, and the Buffalo Bills losing in a high-stakes playoff game, so too is there a certainty that no state budget will satisfy every taxpayer that ultimately helps to foot the bill.

Governor Dan McKee last week announced his budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, and with it comes a litany of decisions that will be deliberated by the legislature for the next few months. Almost certainly, crucial elements of this initial budget proposal will be amended to reflect various different priorities by the time the document is signed and ratified this spring.

However, the initial glimpse into Gov. McKee's priorities based on this first draft of the budget is illuminating.

With the fire hose of federal COVID relief dollars reducing down to a trickle, it was expected that the state's record-high \$14 billion budget of last year would need to shrink to accommodate those lost funds.

But is \$13.7 billion (as proposed) small enough?

We would posit that even more fat could have been trimmed from this budget in the name of a more fiscally conservative approach, which seems prudent now more than ever.

While there is no broad-based tax increases in this budget, we have to wonder why there was a need to include a corporate tax cut amounting to a \$6.1 million spend, and a seemingly trivial estate tax elimination that cost around a quarter of a million dollars. Is eliminating a \$50 transactional fee on someone receiving a \$1.7 million inheritance (the minimum value estate subject to the fee) really a priority here?

We're also dubious of the proposal to ask voters to approve \$60 million in borrowing for a new state archives building. While we are staunch supporters of preserving and celebrating Rhode Island's prolific history, we hardly see the construction of a brand new building as a worthy endeavor worth entering the state into future debt. In fact, it's a little ironic isn't it? Why not find a way to incorporate an existing, historic building that needs some love to be the recipient of some restoration money and become the new home of these historic documents? Surely we can find a way to do that for less than \$60 million.

We support the initiative to continue infusing dollars towards creating more affordable housing, however we are a little concerned that the state still lacks a top-down approach on how to actually create this housing. The bills championed by Speaker Shekarchi and passed last session provide developers more tools to build new projects, but it appears there is a need for some more big picture strategizing on where these developments would be best built, and what the most efficient means of actually creating more affordable units is.

The governor's prioritization of providing more funding for Pre-K and multi-lingual learners is praiseworthy, as we must continue to climb out of the bottom quarter of the country when sharing a border with the nation's educational powerhouse. As is the bond proposal to invest in building biomedical sciences and cybersecurity hubs at two of the state universities.

While taxpayers will be happy not to see any broad-based tax increases, we find the budget to still be troublingly inflated, during a time when the financial health and security of Rhode Island residents, and the state as a whole, is anything but certain moving forward.

## AND THE FLOODING OF LAST WEEK CONTINUES TO CAUSE HAVOC...



LETTER

## 'Someone needs to be held accountable for some very bad decisions'

To the editor,

I took a ride to the new medical facility being constructed on Hartford Avenue. The topography has been changed. The area behind the building has been elevated.

The drainage system that was put into place to keep the water off Belfield Drive has clearly been installed incorrectly. Flooding has been an issue for the residents of Belfield Drive, but the new construction is certainly contributing to this problem.

Now the Mayor has issued an ultimatum to the residents. Move out of your homes or suffer the consequences. Due to poor planning and lack of due diligence in overseeing this project, the residents are the ones who suffer.

Someone needs to be held accountable for some very bad decisions. The casual way in which the residents have been told to leave their homes is reprehensible. Once again, the town chose business over residents.

Who was involved in the planning of this facility?

Were engineers involved to provide a storm water abatement plan? Were the plans reviewed and the developer given guidelines? Who oversees these projects?

Who is responsible? Do we have the wrong people in these positions? All of these are fair and reasonable questions. The residents deserve answers.

Perhaps we need better qualified individuals who will take into consideration the whole town when deciding what is best for Johnston.

The next big project is one that many residents have been fighting for so many reasons. An industrial sized solar array has been proposed on property that abuts Rollingwood Drive, parts of Brown Avenue, Hopkins Avenue and Winsor Avenue.

If the same people keep making the same decisions, we very well may have another Belfield Avenue on Winsor Avenue. These decision-makers need to be held to task. The residents deserve the truth. It's time for us to take our town back.

Thomas Chadwick Sr., of Johnston



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# Landfill

(Continued from page 1)

Initially, RIRRC demanded prepayment of \$900 for public records detailing "any payments, receipts, accounts payable, accounts receivable, contracts, projects or any other interaction between J.R. Vinagro Corporation and RIRRC during the tenure of (Reposa)."

In response, Beacon Communications filed an Open Meetings Violation complaint, challenging the demand for prepayment (and several other records requests that went unfulfilled) with Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Neronha's office. The landfill had 10 days to respond to the complaint.

Beacon Communications also filed a narrower public records request, seeking documentation for "any payments from J.R. Vinagro Corporation to RIRRC" during Reposa's tenure (although we have not withdrawn our initial public records request).

On Tuesday, Jan. 23, attorney Joseph J. Rodio Jr. (RIRRC outside counsel) requested an extension to respond to the AG.

"Due to some previously scheduled Board meetings and hearings, and some absences at RIRRC, I am requesting an extension to file RIRRC's answer from Jan. 25, to Feb. 2," Rodio wrote to staff in the AG's Open Government Unit. A few hours later, Colleen Cole, administrative assistant in the AG's Civil Division, approved the extension.

Later that same afternoon, RIRRC Public Records Officer Jared Rhodes responded to the narrower request,

forwarding documentation detailing Vinagro's payment history between June 19, 2017 and Jan. 22, 2024.

Vinagro and its subsidiaries (for aggregate, trash and soil disposal) paid RIRRC a "grand total" of \$37,370,122.16 while Reposa served as the landfill's top executive.

"Accordingly, we have previously provided you with the first hour for free," Rhodes wrote. "However, in order to estimate the time for search and retrieval of all documentation linked to such payments, we generated the attached accounts receivable summary report which we are providing along with a separate report that reflects potential payments made outside of the accounts receivable system which were readily available at no cost."

For further documentation linked to these payments, RIRRC demanded an additional \$150 from Beacon Communications before it fulfilled the request.

"Based on the summary and review, we estimate that retrieving and providing all documents linked to such payments to take approximately 10 hours," Rhodes wrote. "The cost for search and retrieval efforts for these documents will be \$15 per hour, with the initial hour already expended being free. Accordingly, if you still wish for RIRRC to proceed with all related documentation please provide pre-payment of \$150."

The goal, however, was to obtain a clearer picture of Vinagro's relationship with RIRRC. With more than \$37 million in receipts in-hand, the relationship appears profitable.

"I don't think it was appropriate for that transaction," Johnston state Rep.

Deborah A. Fellela (District 43) responded via email early Wednesday morning. "For them to approach the CEO of the landfill seems improper. Where are the ethics in such a move? To me there is no allegiance and I feel there will be no trustworthiness in the policies that RIRRC has put forth."

### Does It Matter?

Vinagro has recently taken over the Warwick headquarters of the former Cardi Corp., a Rhode Island road and bridge contractor on the hook for massive unfinished projects across the Ocean State.

Reposa quit RIRRC in December and announced his hiring as Vinagro CEO on LinkedIn, a social networking website for professionals.

While employed by RIRRC, Reposa worked under a contract that stipulated he would not share trade secrets learned on the job at the Central Landfill with competitors and customers. The contract also included a non-compete clause. Records requests also revealed that Reposa was earning a \$253,239.48 annual salary at RIRRC, plus a \$25,000 annual performance bonus, before he quit and took the helm at Vinagro, a private company in the same town.

"Even though RIRRC is a quasi-public, as a former employee Mr. (Reposa) is subject to the state's Code of Ethics," according to John Marion, executive director of Common Cause RI. "One important part of the Code is the revolving door law. It doesn't appear that the revolving door would prevent (Reposa) from taking the position with Vinagro, but it does place some important restrictions on his employment there. (Reposa) likely can't, for instance, appear before the RIRRC board for up to a year after he left the agency. He's also prohibited from using information he gained during his time with the agency to benefit his new employer. The prohibition against the use of confidential information is really tricky to enforce, however."

Vinagro representatives have not responded to requests for comment since Reposa took over as CEO.

"Unfortunately it's common in state and federal government for people to move from government to industry, trading on their public service for personal gain," Marion wrote Wednesday morning. "It's particularly precarious when an employee moves to one of the major contractors for the agency they previously managed."

### Your Representation

Opinions differ among Johnston's public officials whether Reposa's move to Vinagro should raise concerns.

"I've always known Joe Reposa to be a good man and J.R. Vinagro to be an excellent local company as well as a good corporate citizen to the town," said Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. "I'm not experienced in waste management or construction management so I can't speak to any non-compete or overlap-

ping trade secrets. But I can say Joe Reposa has a very long resume and if Vinagro is expanding, it makes sense they'd want to go with someone that's both familiar to them, so they know the past quality of work and what they're getting, but also has the requisite experience needed to help manage a multi-million dollar corporation."

Many elected officials may not have the information they need to form an opinion. RIRRC legal counsel requires all requests for information follow official public records request procedures. Payments from Vinagro, and Reposa's contract with RIRRC, were only provided following Beacon Communications' multiple official public records requests.

"I am sorry but I really have no knowledge of the contract or arrangements made between the former Executive Director/CEO of RIRRC and RIRRC nor the arrangements if any made involving J.R. Vinagro," Johnston Town Councilman Robert J. Civetti wrote via email Wednesday morning. "J.R. Vinagro is a large private company and I am guessing that the attorneys for the Corporation did the proper due diligence needed before the hiring. I am also confident that if the contract between the RIRRC and their former CEO was violated that the Board of Directors and the attorneys for this 'Quasi State Agency' would take the appropriate action to seek remediation."

The Johnston Sun Rise reached out to a large swath of Ocean State elected officials for comment on Reposa's move to J.R. Vinagro (and Vinagro's Cardi Corp. HQ takeover).

Only Civetti, Fellela and Polisena responded.

As of press-time Wednesday morning, the Sun Rise had not heard back from the offices of Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee, Attorney General Peter F. Neronha, or Rhode Island House Speaker Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi.

"Although Vinagro does run a recycling facility is it the same recycling as done by RIRRC?" Civetti asked. "I simply do not know enough about the agreements or operations of Vinagro which is probably the same reason many others cannot give you an opinion."

On Wednesday morning, the Sun Rise sent Rodio an official request for comment as RIRRC outside counsel (but not an official records request): "Any legal concerns with a landfill customer of this magnitude hiring the executive director as its CEO? Reposa's contract with RIRRC stipulated he would not share trade secrets learned on the job at the Central Landfill with competitors and customers. No? The contract also seems to include a non-compete clause. Would this move, to a private company and customer in the same town, violate any terms of the former executive director's contract (those clauses that extend beyond the terms of the contract)? Have any board members raised concerns?"

The Sun Rise didn't receive a response by deadline.

## Town of Johnston

# Notice of Public Hearing

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws § 45-24-53 that the Johnston Town Council will hold a Public Hearing **February 12, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.** at the Johnston Municipal Court, located at 1600 Atwood Avenue, Johnston, RI 02919. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to consider proposed **Ordinance 2024-1 (formerly 2023-CP-160)** to amend the Zoning Ordinance and the Official Zoning Map, as summarized here.

<b>Applicant:</b>	Peter St. Lawrence, III
<b>Assessor's Plat:</b>	5
<b>Assessor's Lots:</b>	231, 232, 234, 238, 262 & 263
<b>Present Classification:</b>	R-20
<b>Proposed Change to:</b>	Industrial-L
<b>Said lot being located on:</b>	Starr Street

The proposed Ordinance may be altered or amended prior to the close of the public hearing without further advertising, as a result of further study or because of the views expressed at the public hearing. Said proposed Ordinance is available at the office of the Town Clerk for examination. Any alteration or amendment will be presented for comment in the course of the hearing. All persons interested in the above application are requested to attend said meeting and be heard. Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired must notify the Office of the Town Clerk seventy-two (72) hours in advance of the hearing date.

**Per Order:**  
Robert V. Russo  
Johnston Town Council

**Attest:**  
Vincent P. Baccari, Jr.  
Town Clerk

1/25, 2/1, 2/8/24



**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. (Johnston Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)



# FEMA

(Continued from page 1)

## Open-Ended

No fixed timeline has been set for the DRC's future at the Johnston Senior Center. Property owners have approximately two months, until March 7, to start the FEMA relief application process.

"I'm appreciative to everyone at FEMA for selecting Johnston as their Providence County center," Polisena said. "I am hoping everything runs smoothly and the subsequent disaster declarations for December and January also get approved and Johnston can host the centers again."

Those working at the senior center have been flown in from across the country. They see each state immediately after its worst day — or in the Ocean State's case, four months after a terrible day.

The FEMA staffers have been sent to Johnston to help humanize the process.

"It's always more helpful for people who have questions (if they) can talk to someone in-person rather than 1-800 numbers and email," Polisena said. "What I'm really hoping for is the December and especially January declarations get approved because those floods caused more damage, as a whole, than the September one."

## Still Stuck

Some residents who have been hit the hardest by recent flooding may still not be able to travel off their street. Back on Belfield Drive, some homeowners are still stuck behind a foot-and-a-half of water lingering in the roadway.

Two weeks ago, Polisena had ordered a mandatory evacuation of the Belfield Drive homes cut off from emergency services by flood waters.

Nearly a week later, he had finally secured federal permission to build an access road from Interstate 295 South to Belfield's dead-end, so that emergency services could reach the stranded residents.

By Wednesday, Jan. 17, Polisena announced construction of the temporary access road was ready to commence (the mayor estimates the road and immediate associated flood expenses could cost taxpayers as much as \$500,000). The road opened approximately 24 hours later.

"The access road was completed and operational by Thursday morning (Jan. 19)," Polisena said. "It will remain up until the original closure date, which is Friday, Jan. 26. I was told by the USDOT (U.S. Department of Transportation) and the FHA (Federal Highway Administration) there would be absolutely no exceptions regarding an extension or a reopening at a later date. This was a one-time deal due to all the extreme circumstances."

Heating oil deliveries have been permitted to use the access road twice each day, as needed, during tightly scheduled windows.

"As of today (Tuesday), the water on Belfield sits at about 18 inches," Polise-

na said. "Residents with trucks or SUVs may cross the water if they have the ability to do so. I am hopeful that by Friday, all of our emergency vehicles, including standard police SUVs, are able to get through the water. If by some chance they can't, we will have to deploy the Humvees, again."

## Distant Delegation

More than one property owner on the dead-end street has contacted the Johnston Sun Rise to express concerns regarding the proposed home buyout program for Belfield Drive. The property owners also say they have been contacting Johnston's federal legislators — Rep. Seth Magaziner, Sen. Jack Reed and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse — but have heard little in response.

The Sun Rise reached out to all three of their offices to ask about the federal delegation's efforts to help Johnston residents (a) during this time of flooding and evacuation, and (b) going forward, as they face potential home/land buyouts?

The residents said they are worried, because so far, they have received no written notice (from town, state or federal officials) concerning impending buyouts and potential, future use of eminent domain to take the properties and land (should the residents/property owners refuse "fair market value" offers). Polisena estimates the process may take a few months to get rolling (and he expects deals may be proposed by mid-summer).

Instead of responding individually, communications staff for all three office-holders (Magaziner, Reed and Whitehouse) decided to send the Sun Rise a "joint statement."

"Our offices are working together to help flood victims across the state, including residents of Belfield Drive," Reed, Whitehouse, and Magaziner said in their joint statement. "The delegation has delivered federal aid and flood resiliency funding in the past and will keep advocating for it."

In a follow-up question, spokespeople for all three offices were asked why the FEMA DRC took more than four months to open in Johnston. No response was received by press-time.

Reed's office responded Wednesday morning.

"We don't have a window into the Administration's deliberations while reviewing the request," wrote Chip Unruh, spokesman for Sen. Reed's office. "These requests often take time and sometimes data and evidence has to be double checked to ensure the eligibility requirements are met. The state made the request in early November and the delegation fully supported it. We are grateful to the Administration for giving the state the additional time it needed to complete its request and for ultimately approving it after careful review. This declaration is making a world of difference for the 225-plus Rhode Islanders that have already applied, even if it took a couple extra weeks to get there."

## Strange Days Ahead

A source inside FEMA called the tim-

ing of the Johnston DRC opening "a little weird."

Polisena's awaiting word on follow-up disaster declarations. He said the town has been seeking engineering plans for town-wide flood remediation. Once those plans arrive with price-tags, his administration may take a flood-mitigation bond referendum to voters.

The past three flood events have been particularly taxing for the town's fire and police departments.

"Any flooding in the town is a concern when it comes to public safety," said Johnston Fire Chief David Iannuccilli. "We will always find a way to reach residents; the problem is when our response is delayed due to weather conditions. The weather conditions will determine what equipment is needed at the time of the emergency."

Both departments are in for quite a bit of overtime, and a lot of outside duty in subfreezing temperatures. First-responders waded through waist-deep water and used boats to reach residents.

"This has been very trying for both police and fire, but this is what the men and women signed up for," Iannuccilli said. "We are always here to help the residents of the town no matter what."

Sources inside FEMA said it's also a little unusual to set up a disaster center in the middle of January, outside the hurricane season. Since arriving in Johnston, FEMA staffers have been closely watching flooding across Maine (a trip to Vacationland may be their next assignment). If this year's any indicator, agency employees may be spending more winter weeks in New England, as the region copes with flooding in spots typically unaccustomed to flooding.

The Johnston DRC will be open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and closed on Sunday.

## The Background

Johnston's local emergency management team coordinated with the state before federal officials came to town.

"The Town of Johnston worked with the RI Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) to assess the extent of damage and costs resulting from the Sept. 10-11, 2023 rain/flood events," according to Johnston Emergency Management Director and Police Chief Mark A. Vieira. "RIEMA reviewed the damage assessments from cities and towns in Providence County and the state subsequently determined the extent of damage warranted submitting a request for a federal disaster declaration for assistance in Providence County."

Town officials have been urging property owners to report storm damage to the town, to aid in securing disaster declarations.

"President Biden approved the disaster declaration, and on Jan. 7 ... (FEMA) announced that federal assistance would be made available to affected individuals in Providence County to supplement recovery efforts in the areas affected by the September weather events," Vieira wrote Tuesday evening. "Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-

interest loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster."

According to Vieira, "Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams from FEMA have been in town going door to door to register people who may not have registered for disaster survivor assistance."

He welcomed his federal counterparts: "We appreciate the involvement of RIEMA and FEMA and their efforts to assist our residents after these recent unprecedented weather events."

## Fair Market Value

Ward 5 Town Councilman Robert Civetti has discussed the situation on Belfield Drive with Polisena. His district includes the dead-end street.

"However as of this date I do not have any specifics on the 'home buyouts' or 'eminent domain,'" Civetti wrote via email early Tuesday morning. "We did discuss looking into the home buyouts as this appears to be the only option at this time."

Several Johnston neighborhoods, in addition to Belfield Drive, may be about to change significantly. In December, Polisena mentioned potential home buyout programs for frequently flooded properties on the following streets — Salina Avenue, Rotary Drive and River Avenue.

"I believe that the Mayor indicated that there was grant money available for these buyouts," Civetti explained. "Accordingly, the acquisition of this property would not impact the fund balance/reserves of the Town. If the property is acquired, I believe the Town should then look to either transfer the property to the Land Trust or perhaps see if the property can be turned over to the State of Rhode Island ... and maintained as open space."

Down the hill from the freshly built (but currently unoccupied) Amazon robotic fulfillment center, and a new, under-construction rehabilitation hospital, Belfield Drive lives in the shadow of several major development projects.

"In addition, with the ongoing development of the property just east of Belfield Drive (future location of the rehab hospital) I do not envision the flooding issue getting any better on Belfield Drive," Civetti said. "It is very unfortunate that these residents may have to sell their homes, but if the experts (engineers and federal agencies) are saying that there is nothing we can do to ensure their safety and the safety of our first responders then I am not sure what else the Town can do, but ... offer them fair value for their property."

On a drive to Belfield Drive last Wednesday, Polisena said the town mostly defers to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for storm water management plans, permitting and approvals linked to new development.

"These rain storms are becoming more of the norm vs the so called '100 year' storm," Civetti said.

Every additional inch of impermeable surface is one less inch unavailable to water seeking absorbent topsoil.



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711 or Video Relay Service (VRS): 1-800-621-3362

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- Phone number where you can be contacted
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**Direct Deposit:** Disaster assistance funds can be sent directly to your bank account. Please provide your bank account type, account number and bank routing number.

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711 o el Servicio de Retransmisión de Video (VRS): 1-800-621-3362

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**ANSWER TO THIS WEEK'S PUZZLE:**



**CHARGED:** Below, Joseph L. Giudici, 40, of 7 Canonchet Trail, Johnston, has been arrested and charged with Driving Under the Influence after he struck two marked Rhode Island State Police cruisers on Saturday night, sending two Troopers to the hospital, according to police. RISRP also provided photos from the Providence crash scene. (Photos courtesy RISRP)

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**RISRP: Johnston man arrested for DUI after striking two RI State Police Cruisers, sending two troopers to the hospital**

**Sun Rise Staff Reports**

On Tuesday, Rhode Island State Police announced the arrest Joseph L. Giudici, 40, of 7 Canonchet Trail, Johnston, for Driving Under the Influence after he struck two marked Rhode Island State Police cruisers on Saturday night, sending two Troopers to the hospital.

"Last year, the Rhode Island State Police made over 1,000 arrests for impaired driving, and we are working hard to make our roads safe for everyone on them, including our Troopers," said Colonel Darnell S. Weaver, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police and Director of the Department of Public Safety. "I'm thankful that these Troopers sustained only minor injuries and want to once again remind drivers to drive sober and move over when they see emergency lights."

Around 1:14 a.m., three marked cruisers were stopped in the left lane of Route 6 West, in Providence, with their emergency lights activated, awaiting the arrival of DOT Trucks to assist with the cleaning of road debris from an earlier collision, according to a RISRP press release.



Joseph L. Giudici

"Mr. Giudici struck one of the cruisers in the front passenger-side, in a side swipe manner, and continued on to strike a second cruiser in the rear bumper and passenger side," according to state police. "This collision caused serious damage to both cruisers and Mr. Giudici's vehicle. Both Troopers were treated on scene by Providence Rescue and subsequently transported to Rhode Island Hospital where they were treated for minor injuries and released. Mr. Giudici was treated on scene and trans-

ported to Rhode Island Hospital for non-life-threatening injuries." An investigation at the scene and the hospital determined that Giudici showed signs of impairment. He consented to a blood test. Following the investigation, Giudici was charged with Driving Under the Influence (BAC Unknown; blood test results pending), Driving to Endanger Resulting in Personal Injuries (two counts) and Reckless Driving. Giudici is scheduled to appear in 6th District Court Feb. 1.



# LAW & ORDER JHS

## Johnston High's Mock Trial Team advances to the Playoffs

By **LUCAS ANDERSON**  
Special to the Sun Rise

The Johnston High School Mock Trial Team remains undefeated and advances to the playoff rounds. The team competed in three regular rounds, prevailing over Cranston High School West, Cranston High School East, and Mount Saint Charles Academy.

The RI Legal Education Foundation (RILEF) organizes the competitions, providing opportunities for RI Schools and their students to participate — 25 public and private schools entered this year's tournament.

Mock Trial is an academic competition in which students assume the roles of attorneys and witnesses in conducting a criminal trial. In this year's tournament, State of Rhode Island vs Carolyn Amistad, the case involves the shooting death of a real estate developer on a project site in Douglas County, Rhode Island.

Students are required to learn the law, the rules of procedure, and the rules of evidence that govern actual criminal trials, and prepare and deliver direct and cross-examination questions, testimony, and opening and closing statements.

The trials primarily take place at the Garrahy Judicial Complex in Providence, where an actual judge presides over the proceedings. Volunteer attorneys serve as both the jury and performance judges.

JHS mathematics department chair Anna Herbert, the teacher/coach who heads the JHS program, said, "I could not be more proud of our JHS team this year. They embraced the competition and worked extremely hard to win each round. It is an honor to lead them."

In preparation for each round, along with the efforts of Mrs. Herbert, our students have received very valuable coaching from our local attorney, Jacqueline Grasso, Esq.

**Editor's Note:** Lucas P. Anderson serves as Johnston High School Student Council Vice President and Representative of the Class of 2025. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes stories submitted by JHS students.



**CHAMPION ORDER:** Participating students include (from left) Melissa Aguilar, Colin Bishop, Genesis Pineda (captain), Lucas Anderson, Gabriella Pascale, Alex Pannone (captain), Jadyr Giroux, Neko Mahony, Anthony Pannone, Madison Campano, and team coach Anna Herbert. (Photo courtesy Lucas Anderson)

### Introducing Our Newest Team Member



Massey And Associates, Inc. is proud to welcome Alex Cabral, Investment Advisor Representative, to our growing advisory team of five. Alex grew up in Cranston, Rhode Island and completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Rhode Island.

After graduating, Alex worked in Banking for five years before joining the Massey team. She will assist our team in providing straightforward and strategic financial advice in a manner consistent with meeting the goals and values of our clients.

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By JENNIFER COATES

The holidays may be behind us but Old Man Winter is still treating us to some record low temperatures and challenging weather conditions making any unnecessary travel treacherous and risky. The residents of The Preserve at Briarcliffe are well-advised to stay close to home while they ride out these chilly New England days.

For many seniors, these dark and cold days can be especially lonely and isolating. Research has shown that this loneliness and isolation can have some very detrimental effects on people, but particularly on the elderly. Dr. Ronan Factora, a geriatrician at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, has said "One of the things we learned during the pandemic is that social isolation is a really big problem and is probably one of the most recognized contributors to mental health issues now in the United States." He adds, "For older individuals, it's a bigger deal."

Dr. Factora further explains that loneliness can be a precursor for depression and that getting the chance to socialize with others can elevate a person's mood. This socialization can also be

beneficial to their cognitive and physical health. Some researchers also propose that regular interaction with others may actually improve memory and longevity as it reduces stress and isolation.

Briarcliffe President & CEO Akshay Talwar and his team at Briarcliffe Preserve, a state-of-the-art senior living community in Johnston, are completely committed to staving off the negative effects of loneliness and isolation, not only in the drab days of winter, but all year long!

A visit to this modern and exquisitely-appointed residence, with its myriad amenities, will allow one to see this commitment in full display. Planned activities for socialization are supplemented by a beautiful communal dining room where the residents enjoy restaurant style dining three times a day. There is always someone making note of who is present, who is well, who is lonely, who is feeling sadness, who needs companionship, who needs encouragement, who needs an extra dose of comfort and compassion.

The Preserve is dedicated to "preserving," protecting, and prolonging the mental, physical, and emotional health of all of its residents. This overarching goal has informed every decision made at this Continued Care Retirement Community, from its conception to its completion.

Every detail of this senior living community was intentionally designed to make its residents and guests alike feel at home. This includes a wide array of highly personalized amenities and services such its weekly housekeeping, laundry and linen services, call and monitoring systems and scheduled transportation to appointments and outings. Regular and frequent contact with others is incorporated into every aspect of daily life at The Preserve.

Now is a great time to schedule your in-person tour of The Preserve at 54 Old Pocasset Road. To arrange for your tour, call 401.944.2450 or visit Briarcliffe online at [www.briarclifferi.com](http://www.briarclifferi.com).

## DOT: Washington Bridge may need to be rebuilt

By NANCY LAVIN

Bad news for motorists.

There's no completion date for repairs to the I-195 Washington Bridge, and the damage uncovered in December may even necessitate a "full reconstruction," Rhode Island Department of Transportation Director Peter Alviti Jr. told reporters at a last-minute press conference Monday afternoon.

Alviti outlined three scenarios being explored by engineers in an update at RIDOT's Providence headquarters:

"It could be a repair of the existing structure, although extensive. It could be a reconstruction of various components of the bridge structure or it could be a complete rebuild of the entire bridge."

The news comes a little over a month after the abrupt closure of the westbound lanes of the bridge. Soon after the emergency snarled traffic for hours, and weeks, officials laid out a three-month timeline for repairs and a full reopening of the highway on the bridge crossed by over 96,000 vehicles a day.

Now, that three-month timeline is out the window, and the extent of damage could be worse than originally thought. Alviti declined to share a new timeline, citing the evaluation of the bridge which is still underway.

Gov. Dan McKee, who opened the press conference, also emphasized the ongoing analysis.

"We want Rhode Islanders to know that the direction we take with this project will be driven by the facts we get from the expert engineers," McKee said. "No final decisions can or will be made until we have all the facts from the engineers."

Also uncertain, the price tag for the work, which hinges on the engineering analysis, too.

RIDOT in a statement following the briefing said it is working "24/7" with "several engineering consultants" to assess the bridge's condition and come up with a plan to ensure drivers' safety. Meanwhile, construction including opening new lanes to manage traffic continues, RIDOT said.

"The department also is developing contingencies for funding to be redirected to this project to assure that it has priority," RIDOT said in a statement.

A new, dedicated page on the department website will offer further updates on the bridge repair and analysis.

The House Oversight Committee plans to hold a public hearing about the status of the Washington Bridge on either Feb. 13 or Feb. 14, said House spokesman Larry Berman.

In a statement, House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi said: "We are awaiting a report from the engineering consultants, which is currently underway, in order to have the appropriate information for a hearing to discuss a path forward."

**Editor's Note:** Nancy Lavin is senior reporter covering state politics, energy and environmental issues for the Rhode Island Current, an independent, nonprofit news outlet focused on state government and the impact of public policy decisions in the Ocean State. For more stories from the Rhode Island Current, go to [rhodeislandcurrent.com](http://rhodeislandcurrent.com).

## Bus-full



**BUS FILLED:** Troop 20 sponsored a Fill the Bus! event on Jan. 20, collecting pillows, blankets and clothing in an effort to earn money to cover their Sea-Base adventure (a "high adventure camp that helps scouts learn to survive in the wilderness"). Johnston State Rep. Deborah Fellela stopped by to show her support.

## Obituaries

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# Sports

## Panthers beat Titans, fall to Lions

### JHS boys enter big two-week slate

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Johnston boys basketball team rolled past Toll Gate 76-44 last week to extend its unbeaten record to 9-0, however, fell to Lincoln the following game to take its first league loss in a potential championship match-up.

Despite a sluggish start in the opening few minutes against Toll Gate, the Panthers would catch fire when Jayden Testa drilled a trio of three's and finished the opening frame with 11 points. That spark fueled the Panther offense the rest of the way as it then outscored the Titans 30-6 in the second quarter to put the game out of reach the rest of the way.

"Jayden is hungry, he's hungry every game and he's ready to go. He's going to have to be consistent for us going into this stretch and have some big games for us," said Johnston coach Mike Bedrosian of Jayden Testa's impact this season as a sniper from beyond the arc.

Jayden Testa finished the day with 22 points while Neari Vasquez scored 13 and Michael Carlino 10. Brayden Healey and Dylan Perreault led Toll Gate with 10 points each.

The Panthers took on Lincoln in a big DII showdown on Monday, with each club entering the contest undefeated and atop the standings. Despite leading at half and being tied 40-40 heading into the fourth quarter, the Panthers were unable to hold on as the Lions roared to the 63-58 win. Vasquez finished with 15 points while Carlino and Branden Testa each put up 12.

Johnston is now in its toughest stretch of the regular season, taking on St. Ray's, Tolman and Rogers in the next three games, all of which are in the top-6 in the standings.

The Panthers are looking forward to the grind and proving that they are still the top club in the division as



IN THE PAINT: Johnston's Davian Nunez battles through a defender. (Photo by Alex Sponseller)

PANTHERS - PAGE 14

**CLASSY COORDINATORS:** Vin LaFazia (left) and famed chef-caterer Ralph DeFusco are all smiles while planning the annual Ricky Salzillo Memorial Game Dinner that's set for Sunday, Feb. 4. (Submitted photos)



## Salzillo Memorial Game Dinner slated for Feb. 4

By PETE FONTAINE

The late Richard D. "Ricky" Salzillo, a one-time basketball standout, musician and singer, will be remembered on Sunday, Feb. 4 during one of Rhode Island's oldest and most important fundraising events inside the Santa Maria DiPrata Club at 21 Walnut Grove in Cranston.

Because the late Salzillo, who people still say Ricky's most enduring quality was his huge heart and kindness to others and that he was enormously popular, the annual Memorial Game Dinner figures to again be sold out.

Chairman Steven Placella, a prominent Johnston attorney who along with Vin LaFazia and the brothers

SALZILLO - PAGE 14

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Salzillo

(Continued from page 13)

Fede – Nick and Frank – today announced that only 20 tables of 10 seats each will be sold. The event will start at 12 noon and tickets are \$40 per person and available on a first come, first-served basis. To reserve a table please call Placella at (401) 255-3478 or La Fazia at (401) 233-2564.

The proceeds will again benefit eight Ricky Salzillo Memorial Scholarships as well as Hasbro Children’s Hospital, FARA, ALS and Needy Veterans and others.

For people not familiar with the event, the late Salzillo passed away on Feb. 10, 1976 in an automobile accident on his way home to Johnston and soon thereafter his many friends formed the Ricky Salzillo Memorial Fund during a meeting at the once famed Ruffstone Tavern in North Providence.

Since then, the Ricky

Salzillo Memorial Game Dinner has grown in popularity and become an annual event that many people will attest is a tradition unlike any other.

For starters, the entire game dinner is prepared by the incomparable Ralph DeFusco, who owns and operates Ralph’s Catering, which is now based at the Prata Club and the dinner courses will be served by his super staff.

“If you’ve never had Ralph’s food, plan on buying a ticket; his food is second to none,” a long-time dinner attendee offered. “Then there’s the incredible raffle ...”

Enter the brothers Fede – Frank and Nick – Johnston natives who own and operate Kingstown Liquors on Post Road in North Kingstown who through the years have coordinated a raffle with valuable prizes ranging from camping stoves and refrigerators to fully stocked wine and liquor racks.

“There’s no other raffle like this,” Placella and LaFazia noted. “It’s a raffle that everyone who comes to the dinner looks forward to each year and has always brought in additional revenue.”

So, the stage is set for the annual Ricky Salzillo Memorial Game Dinner that’s named for a late Johnstonian, La Salle Academy basketball standout and mighty musician who loved to belt out the famous songs of Ray Charles and Joe Cocker, just to name a few.

Moreover, proceeds from the dinner – which people say is like a huge family or class reunion – have helped fund the Fitness Court in his name and Veterans Pavilion in Johnston War Memorial Park as well as many other important non-profits.

As Placella and LaFazia related: “His friends and relatives have chosen to honor the memory and person of Rick Salzillo because we know that had he been with us today, he would have continued to make a difference in all our lives.”



**FANTASTIC FUNDRAISERS:** One of the highlights of the annual Ricky Salzillo Memorial Game Dinner is a multi-prize raffle coordinated by Johnston natives Frank and Nick Fede who own and operate Kingstown Liquors in North Kingstown.



**MEMORIAL MAN:** This is a picture of the late Ricky Salzillo in his later years in 1976 and another during his childhood.



Panthers

(Continued from page 13)

defending champs.

“We’re confident because we’re the defending champs. We want to beat people because we know that people have us circled. We’re not chasing anyone in our division,” said Branden Testa.

Jayden Testa added: “It’s really fun to be in these games. Nothing compares to those close games and that energy.”

Although the Panthers entered the tough stretch unbeaten, Bedrosian believes that they will be playing with a chip on their shoulder these next

two weeks.

“They’re hungry. Everyone is saying that Johnston hasn’t played anyone yet, everyone is talking about everyone other than us. As far as I’m concerned, what I’ve been telling them is that we’re the team to beat. We’re the defending champs and until we’re dethroned, we’re the team to beat,” said Bedrosian, who will also be relying on Vasquez and Carlino’s leadership as they were key members of last year’s championship run. “I told them from day one that no one has the experience that we have, no one has been in those games. Nothing is going to be too big for

them. They’ll just need to stay mentally tough and disciplined, they’re going to have to rally the troops. The moment isn’t going to be too big for them and they’re buying into it.”

The biggest key for the team will be how it handles adversity when it’s faced with it, according to Bedrosian.

“We’re going to see how good we really are in the next two weeks. If we can get five or six wins in the next two weeks, I’ll be happy. It’s very hard to go undefeated but it’s all about how we stay together,” Bedrosian said. “It’s going to be tough, but we’re built for it.”

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# NOAA announces \$9.9 million right whale partnership

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

The shipping, boating, commercial and recreational fishing industries have asked NOAA Fisheries and partners to identify new and better ways to track and avoid collisions with all large ocean animals, particularly the North American right whale. So, the fishing community was particularly pleased to hear about the right whale NOAA Fisheries/MITRE Corporation partnership announced earlier this month.

The \$9.9 million NOAA Fisheries/MITRE partnership will support North Atlantic right whale recovery efforts using Inflation Reduction Act funds. MITRE is a not-for-profit company that bridges the gap between government and industry, tackling complex challenges with no commercial interest. MITRE's Center for Enterprise Modernization is the lead on this project.

Endangered North Atlantic right whales are one of the most imperiled species on the planet and have experienced a rapid decline over the past decade. The latest preliminary estimate suggests there are approximately 360 remaining, with only about 70 breeding females. NOAA Fisheries and partners are dedicated to conserving and rebuilding this whale population.

The partnership with MITRE will focus on the development of technologies and engineering approaches related to whale detection, vessel strike avoidance, and ropeless/on-demand fishing gear. This partnership will support NOAA's North Atlantic Right Whale Road to Recovery, which describes efforts to address threats to the species and monitor recovery progress.

Any advancements in technological solutions identified through this partnership will be shared broadly, allowing other species vulnerable to these threats such as other large whales to benefit as well.

NOAA recently announced dates for a right whale vessel strike risk reduction technology workshop scheduled for March 5-7, 2024, in Arlington, Virginia. Working collaboratively with mariners, industry, and technology and engineering firms including MITRE is essential to ensuring the conservation of right whales in these busy waters. For more information visit NOAA's website at North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Risk Reduction Technology Workshop | NOAA Fisheries.

### Waterways stocked for winter fishing

Massachusetts and Rhode Island have been engaged in a trout stocking program. Massachusetts stocked over 60,000 trout in area waterways this year and last week Rhode Island had a special stocking in eleven waterways.

Falls Pond and Whiting Pond in North Attleboro as well as Wallum Lake in Douglas were stocked in the fall. For a complete current list of stocked ponds in Massachusetts visit Mass Wildlife at Trout stocking report | Mass.gov .

Last week, the Rhode Island the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) stocked 11 freshwater ponds with Rainbow Trout, Brook Trout, and Sebago Salmon. Waterbodies stocked include Melville Ponds, Portsmouth; Simmons Mill Pond, Little Compton; Stafford Pond, Tiverton; Willett Pond, East Providence; Barbers Pond, South Kingstown; Wyoming Pond, Hopkinton; Silver Spring Lake, North Kingstown; Meadowbrook Pond, Richmond; Watchaug Pond, Charlestown; Round Top Ponds, Burrillville; and Peck Pond, Burrillville.

Visit DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife's Facebook Page or www.dem.ri.gov/fishing for more information on stocking. Information about stocked freshwaters, size and

creel limits for all freshwater fish species is available in the 2023-24 Freshwater Fishing Abstract, or by calling DEM's Great Swamp Field Office at 401-789-0281.

### Big fish are caught in the winter, rig tying seminar Monday

I always loved the Vince Lombardi saying about big football games. It went something like this, "Big games are won in the summer" when ball players put in the time to train.

So too with fishing... big fish are caught in the winter when you prepare to catch them.

Attend the RI Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) seminar on fishing rig tying to prepare for the season on Monday, Jan. 29, 7 p.m. at the West Warwick Elk's Lodge, 60 Clyde Street, West Warwick, RI. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Members free, non-members are asked for a \$10 donation to the RISAA scholarship fund.

Learn how to tie tautog, summer flounder (fluke), cod, black sea bass rigs and more from RISAA member experts.

Have questions, call Scott Travers, Executive Director at 401.826.2121 or email him at [travers@risaa.org](mailto:travers@risaa.org).

### Chowder Festival February 17

The second annual Battle of the Clam Chowdahs sponsored by Fishing for the Mission 22, a non-profit to help veterans in crisis, will be held February 17, 2024 at Stone Path Malt, 11 Kendrick Road, Wareham, MA.

The tasting of chowders from area restaurants will take place from 1 to 4 p.m. with a \$15 per person donation, or \$30 per person which includes entertainment and an "Elvis Valentine Show" from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. For information visit [www.fishingforthemission22.org](http://www.fishingforthemission22.org)

### Workshop on fishing regulations Feb. 5 in RI

Anglers are reminded of one of the most important regulation meetings of the year. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) Division of Marine Fisheries will hold a regulatory workshop on Monday, Feb. 5, 2024, at 4:30 p.m. to solicit input regarding prospective and/or proposed amendments to the marine fisheries regulations. Recreational species discussed at the workshop will include scup. Black sea bass, summer flounder, as well as commercial and recreational regulations for striped bass, bluefish and tautog.

The in person meeting will be held at the URI Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium, 215 South Ferry Road, Narragansett RI. The hybrid meeting's Zoom webinar link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86560685183?pwd=Z2w1anFZM3pTNDBoXVpdVpNaDBwZz09> [us02web.zoom.us] ; meeting ID: 865 6068 5183; Passcode: 565590; dial in: 1-929-205-6099 (listen only)

### Where's the bite?

Freshwater fishing in stocked ponds for trout and salmon continues to be good with a largemouth bass bite too. For a complete list of trout stocked ponds in Massachusetts visit Mass Wildlife at Trout stocking report | 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 fishing has been limited with high winds and storms. However, anglers continue to catch school striped bass and an occasional keeper in salt ponds and estuaries. If you want to try your hand at cod fishing call ahead to make a party boat reservation, vessels will sail once the weather clears. 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.



**TROUT STOCKING:** Last week eleven Rhode Island waterways were stocked with rainbow and brook trout as well as Sebago salmon. (Submitted photo)

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**RAISE YOUR VOICES:** Valerie Tutson leads the gathered at the Funda Fest 26 Opening Party in a prayer. (Photos by Kevin Fitzpatrick)

## Funda Fest 26 puts black Rhode Islanders Center Stage

By **KEVIN FITZPATRICK**

For three weeks out of the year, Rhode Islanders are afforded the opportunity to celebrate an art so fundamental to the human experience that one might forget it's an art at all: storytelling.

Funda Fest, now in its 26th year, is an annual exhibition of some of the greatest black story tellers in Rhode Island and beyond. The festival's storytellers draw from cultural roots in Colonial America, the Caribbean, Mali, South Africa, South Providence, and anywhere one can find members of the black diaspora. And it's all happening now.

Funda means "to learn" in Zulu. It's a word Valerie Tutson, executive director and co-founder of Funda Fest and the Rhode Island Black Storytellers (RIBS), which organizes the event every year, brought back with her from a trip to South Africa, during which time she was considering how she might emulate the festivals of the National Association of Black Storytellers here in Rhode Island. With the help of Ramona Bass-Kolobe, an original cast member of the Rites and Reasons Theatre at Brown's Department of Africana Studies, and other local storytellers, as well as a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation, Funda Fest was born.

"Our first year we had invited four artists. And we had one school that we visited and we did two shows," Tutson said of the festival's beginnings. "So it was kind of like a little weekend, a long weekend with four artists. This year, we have three weekends all across Rhode Island. And we have more than 26 artists who will be performing."

RIBS and Funda Fest operated for most of their two decades as a volunteer run non-profit, and while the organization remained solvent for all that time, the turbulence in the country which resulted from both the pandemic and the protests following the killing by police of George Floyd, Tutson and RIBS chose to consider the organization's longevity.

"I think we got to experience sort of a racial reckoning, and we're, oh my gosh, what's happening with black nonprofits in the state?" Tutson asked. "You know, there was this awareness that you know, less than 3% of our nonprofits in Rhode Island are run by people of color."

In the following years up unto the present, RIBS has taken on a full-time executive director, Tutson, as well as a business manager. In addition to the festival, they now host storytelling camps for kids during February, April, and summer vacations in concert with the Rhode Island Department of Education. They will also be launching a "legacy program" aimed to teach adults storytelling skills.

Tutson herself is an accomplished storyteller with a deep well of cultural memory. She has performed around the country and internationally, drawing on tales of the black experience in American history, and stories from south and west Africa. She sees the role of storytelling in every culture, and particularly in black culture, as essential to learning one's values and "how to be in the world."

"Sometimes those historical stories or even the folktales give you real insight into the cultural values that have survived," Tutson says. "And if we kind of had access to those, I tend to think we wouldn't be so crazy right now. You know? We would understand our place in humanity, not just our moment in time."



**MOTHER:** Sylvania Ann Soares, one of the "Mothers" of RIBS, hosts the Storytelling for Grown Folk event at Southside Cultural Center of Rhode Island.

**FUNDA FEST 26**  
A CELEBRATION OF BLACK STORYTELLING



# Funda

(Continued from page 16)

The inaugural event of Funda Fest 26 was a party held in the Rites and Reasons Theatre, a black box in which many of RIBS' most prominent members trained, performed, and learned the craft of storytelling. The shadow of one man in particular looms large over the party goers. A man whose name adorns the entrance to the theatre. A man who, during a lull in the music, the storytellers would take time to tell stories about: George Houston Bass.

Ramona Bass-Kolobe was a student at Brown when African American students staged a walkout, demanding a deeper commitment from the university to students of color. She was also a student two years later when Houston Bass, a prolific playwright and director, was hired to teach theatre and Afro-American (now called Africana) Studies. She would also later go on to marry the man.

"This is my womb," Bass-Kolobe said as she sat in the black box, holding her cane between her legs as her daughter, contemporaries, and former students listened on. "Before I came into this room, and this became my womb, I was part of a group of black students at Brown who were doing black theater and we said 'Oh, this is black theatre! But we want somebody to come show us the way.' And so George Houston Bass graciously agreed to come up and guide us on the journey of not just reading plays out of a book, because he told us the plays you need to do are the plays that come out of your people and your mind and your community. And so we said 'Well, what does that look like?' And he said 'Go start doing the research!'"

Houston Bass encouraged his students to go out into the communities of Providence and collect stories, from which they would create performances. From this formula, Rites and Reasons Theatre was born, and the traditions established there would go on to influence the performances seen at Funda Fest today.

Performances like those of Len Cabral, another founder of RIBS, director of Providence Inner City Arts, and 46 years a storyteller. Cabral often works with educators to help them develop storytelling skills as a daily learning aid in the classroom. He was gracious enough to explain his methods during the party.

"I do the approach of three E's — entertainment, education, and engagement," he says. He explains that of the three, the last is most crucial of all. "Without engagement, there's no entertainment happening. There's no education ... The most important thing is engage your listeners. Then you can take them places."

"Say I'm telling a story to a group of third-graders," Cabral continues. "I'll ask them a question they know the answer to. I'll say 'Do rabbits have short or long tails?' I know they're gonna say 'Short!' And I'll say 'Well NOW they do!' Then I'll go like this ..."

Cabral leans in close, and drops his voice low and conspiratorially, he begins, "Long ago ... Just that movement tells the audience 'You're gonna tell us a secret!'"

Cabral will be hosting Funda Fest's Liar's Contest this year on Feb. 2 at the Cape Verdean Club in East Providence. The contest is an opportunity for non-professional storytellers to try their hand at spinning a yarn. Participants will have five minutes to tell a family friendly lie, to be judged on Originality, Delivery, and Audience Response, for a first place prize of \$200.

Rachel Briggs, an elementary school science teacher in Providence, uses those same skills to enrich and enliven her classes.

"[Storytelling] can be so useful in the classroom for every subject," she says. "Every subject, you can break off into a story. Or you get take the information that we're giving to students and fix it in a way that it creates a story, and it's so more it more meaningful! When we relate it to something at their age level, it just makes sense, because kids know stories. Whether they're reading or not they'll know stories, they can't help it."

Briggs often uses her skills as a storyteller and a science teacher to highlight black scientists who haven't received the celebration they deserve. She gives an example: Granville T. Woods. Woods was an African American inventor who lived during the latter half of the 19th century, who held over 50 patents.

"So I focus on those comprehension questions," she says of her process. "What, when, where, how, and why do we care about him?"

"I don't get hung up on dates, because I feel like those are fillers that kids will pick up on later on," she continues. "What's more important is who he was. Where he started, in terms of the place and the time and how he got to be the adult he was. His persistence. He was in a time where no black man would be recognized for what he was doing. But he still did it."

Like Cabral, Briggs says engagement is most important of all, and there's cognitive science backing the claim. "I was reading this book about culturally responsive teaching, and it turns out the brain, once it gets information, it takes 20 seconds before the brain decides whether or not it will continue engaging in what you're talking about. So storytelling from the start, you have to be engaging, so that the audience wants to go further with you in the story."

Briggs performed in the first act of Funda Fest 26's first evening performance "Storytelling for Grown Folk" at the Southside Cultural Center Of Rhode Island in Providence on Saturday, Jan. 20. She, along with



**GOING DOWN:** David Gonzalez performs a heart-wrenching and hilarious retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Tutson, Bass-Kolobe, and a few others from RIBS' "Mothers" each took a turn telling stories from history, or their own lives.

Briggs told an uplifting story about her own choice to rise above the opinions and perceptions of others. Bass-Kolobe told of a trip she took with her husband to Botswana, and her sometimes harrowing, sometimes humorous encounters with packs of urban baboons. Tutson took on a story of a woman escaping slavery and her journey from Alabama all the way into Canada with her dog in tow.

Award-winning playwright, poet, and performer David Gonzalez was the evening's headliner. He chose to perform the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice through the lens of 20th century black musicians who had influenced him throughout his life: Lightnin' Hopkins, Muddy Waters, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, a long list of those whom he calls "The Real S---."

Before he began, he apologized for an illness in his throat and what effect it may have on his performance. Then he launched into a perfect, lightning quick stretch of scat and air-saxophone. His retelling of Orpheus, the greatest musician in the world and Eurydice, his wife who was bitten by a snake and snatched away to the underworld on their wedding night, was sharp, elegant, hilarious and tear-wrenching, punctuated with acapella snippets of those musicians he loved so much. He rarely seemed to take a breath and neither did the audience. Engagement, Briggs and Cabral would point out.

"Sometimes I call storytelling 'poor theater,'" Gonzalez said after the show. "In that we are the orchestra. We are the stage. We are the light. We are the sound. We are the lyricist. We're the book-writer where, you know, it's all in there. And my style personally is, you know, I'm coming at music and movement. So I really tried to bring those elements into my voice, into my gestural vocabulary, into creating a world that is sort of theatrically enchanting."

Speaking more on the thesis of his performance, Gonzales said, "For me, black music has been a guiding light in terms of personal expression, creative courage, discipline, generosity, soulful fun, community and a secular kind of spirituality. You hear somebody like Stevie Wonder, and you hear it, you hear it, hear it in great black music. It's the integration of spirit and soul, heart, hard work, and it moves through that space."

Such masters will be putting their craft on display throughout the rest of the festival. Production Manager Marlon Carey is particularly excited to have invited Dr. Amina Blackwood Meeks to perform, in collaboration with the Jamaican Association of Rhode Island.

Meeks is an award-winning writer, actress, storyteller and advocate from Jamaica who was compared by different people at the party to such stars among folklorists as Miss Lou and Zora Neale Hurston. Carey notes she is also an instrumental part of the push to make Jamaican Patois the official language of Jamaica. Meeks will be at multiple events throughout Funda Fest, the first of which will be at an event titled Afro/Caribbean Storytelling in South County South Kingston High School on Jan. 25.

Carey, an immigrant from Jamaica himself living in the United States since childhood, has become an expert on the unique phenomenon of black storytelling in Rhode Island through work with numerous organizations in Providence. He spoke of a project he was hired to do with the Womens' Project at Brown, for which he had an opportunity to research Rhode Island's deep embroilment in the Atlantic slave trade.

"Rhode Island was one vertex on the triangle trade," Carey said. "So this has a rich history of the diaspora."

He continued, "If more than half of the voyages that left from America to go enslave individuals left from Rhode Island, that must mean that everybody who was on a ship needed sails. Sails are made here; you're going to need provisions. Butter, wool, you talked about coffee, you talk about the manacles."

He brought up the Sally, a slave ship owned by the Brown family in the 18th century on which over 100 enslaved people were murdered by the captain, died of disease, starvation or suicide on just one deadly voyage. Carey pointed out that it was not only the Browns who had a stake in that voyage. Average Rhode Islanders also took out bonds on the Sally's voyages.

Enslaved people always lived in Rhode Island, Carey said. Financiers exploited their labor to do book work.

They were seen on Providence streets shopping for their captors or working at skilled labor in cooper shops building barrels. Their labor was used to build Brown.

"All of this Ivy League prestige is built, literally built by people volunteering their enslaved individuals for a piece of the pie," Carey said.

"And if you've never been on the receiving end of the reverberation of that kind of pressure and all that you can't tell somebody to get over it," Carey said. "You can't say 'aren't we actually done with that yet? We're so far past that.'"

All that said, Carey looks to times in America's history when people of all races have stood together, and that too needs to be recognized.

"We still need to grow and we can get together on this," he said. "Because if I look at the Dr. Martin Luther King pictures, there are lots of black and white arm in arm in arm. He's holding hands with a white priest. You know, he's holding hands with the Jews are there supporting him."

"This is part of what RIBS does is to tell the stories, to share them, and have us figure out how we can understand that it is our collective story," Carey said. "That it's American history. Not black history. There is no American history without black history, we need to hold that together and move forward on that level and not continue any separations."

In 2023 RIBS and Funda Fest were selected by the Rhode Island Foundation to receive a \$100,000 seeded endowment fund. The fund, which will continue to grow over the years as the organization develops, will help to ensure RIBS' ability to continue telling a more complete history of Rhode Island, the United States, and the world well into the future.

Tutson expressed her gratefulness for the investment in RIBS' future in true form, with a story. "There is a storyteller who teaches us a song from Malawi and the greeting is 'I see you, I see with my eyes and my heart in front of me and I greet you with respect.' It feels as if we've been seen."

Funda Fest will be holding performances as well as film screenings until Feb. 3. For details, tickets and RSVP info, visit [fundafest.org](http://fundafest.org).

## ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

Local Adoptable Loveable

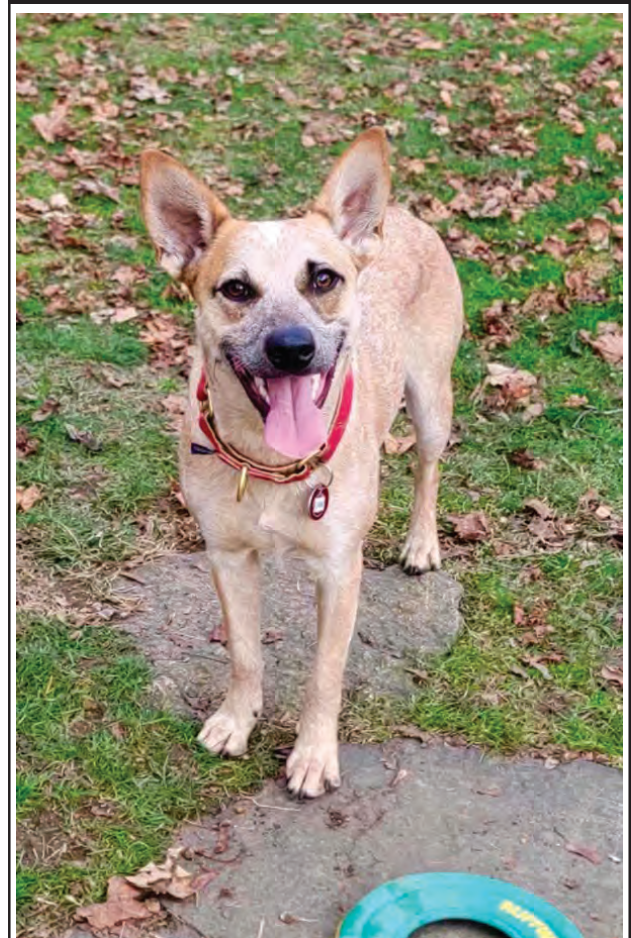


Photo credit: Save One Soul Rescue

# Kynlee

Let's play fetch! Kynlee is a young, gorgeous athletic girl who loves to play. She's a year old Red Heeler mix who would love a home with a fenced in yard and another playful dog to be her new best friend. Her ears and her smile just add to her charm! Kynlee is eager to learn and aims to please, she's an all-around great pup. If you'd like to see this beauty in person, please contact Save One Soul via their email [info@sosarl.org](mailto:info@sosarl.org) or visit their website at [www.sosarl.org](http://www.sosarl.org) She will be eagerly waiting to meet you too!

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Jim O'Brien, Jennifer Mischley, and Zach Gibb in HIR by Taylor Mac at Wilbury Theatre Group. (Photo by Erin X. Smithers)

# Shocking dark comedy at Wilbury

Theatre Review  
by DON FOWLER

Isaac (Zach Gibb) comes home from Afghanistan after three years to find his dysfunctional family in absolute chaos.

His sister, Max (Will Malloy) is now as transsexual. His abusive father, Arnold (Jim O'Brien) has suffered a stroke, is dressed as a clown, and is controlled with estrogen milkshakes by his controlling wife Paige (Jennifer Mischley).

Isaac has some baggage of his own, having been dishonorably discharged due to drug issues.

The house is a mess. Clothes, books and household items are strewn everywhere. His father is sleeping in a cardboard box.

Mother Paige has taken control of the "new Regime". She spouts her theories on sex, religion, racism, and her child's transsexuality. She calls it Radical Reimagining.

Isaac is determined to bring the family back to some sense of normalcy, whatever that is, by gaining control of the family from his mother, who is not willing to concede.

Paige leaves the house to visit a museum, and Isaac goes to work. The first act ends, and he goes to work cleaning and rearranging the house. (The stage crew

works hard and fast).

Paige returns and conflict takes over.

Paige spouts her theories. Isaac challenges them. Max adds his/her radical thoughts on gender.

Arnold sits there with his nightgown, wig and face painted, Isaac fights to bring him some dignity.

Soldiers come home to a different world with their own secrets, author Taylor Mac tells us. Mac suggests much more during this two-hour, R-rated play.

If you are easily affected by profanity, sexual references, drugs, violence, and racism, this is one you might skip.

I found much on which to ponder as Mac raises a multitude of issues, allowing the audience to decide where they stand.

The acting is excellent, especially Zach Gibb, who makes you feel his raging anger and confusion. Author Mac has him vomiting a bit too much, but in another scene a moment of violence resulting in a bloody nose is as realistic as I've ever seen on stage. (Credit to director Brien Lang, who has caught the essence of this challenging play.)

"Hir" is at Wilbury Theatre Group, located in the Waterfire building, through February 4.

Go on line at the [thewilburygroup.org](http://thewilburygroup.org) for reservations.

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What are all those red blotches showing up on earth? Could it possibly be war between the countries? What are the six co-workers to do?

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Ariana DeBose stars in the film "I.S.S." (Photo courtesy of Bleecker Street Productions)

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# Movies



What happened to teamwork and trust? Do they continue to work together to save themselves and the I.S.S. or do they remain loyal to their countries?

Looks like we have a problem here. And one big allegory!

The hour-and-a-half movie turns violent as one of the crew members shows his allegiance to his country.

The movie ends leaving us—and the I.S.S. up in the air.

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A big winner at the Golden Globes and the Emmies, "Beef" is filled with twists and turns, holding your interest over ten 35-minute episodes.

The series provides good roles for several talented Asian actors.

The first episode introduces us to the two main characters, Amy and Daniel, as they let out their frustrations in a road rage incident.

Their paths continue to cross in bizarre ways. She is married with a young daughter, while he is single, living with his younger brother. She is a wealthy businesswoman, while he is a poor small business construction company owner involved in a number of shady deals.

Every episode has a twist, as the two follow paths of depression, self-discovery, revenge, violence and conflict.

We learn much about them and their culture. We also learn that they are not always honest, and not always honest with themselves.

Great acting and story telling.





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15 Hide Away	Lugiski, Mary M	Holland, Shawn	1/2	\$145,000
39 Circlewood Dr	Keener Kevin K Est and Keener, Andrew M	Tri J Construction LLC	1/4	\$441,000
43 Ginger Trl	Wasilewski, Arthur and Stone, Jillian	Voast, Eric V and Voast, Nichole V	1/5	\$605,000
1136-138 S Main St	Lapham, W D	Desautel, David J	1/5	\$375,000
255 Read Ave	Carpenter, Anne L and Carpenter, Bethany R	Wisdom, Denise F	1/5	\$185,000

## Cranston

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17 Birch View Ct Lot 7	Hamilton Rt and Hamilton, Gregory V	Simeone, Nicholas R and Simeone, Jessica L	12/29	\$580,000
16 Ingleside Ave	Yarnel, Carol E	Dimaura, John T and Dimaura, Lisa	1/4	\$315,000
30 Forest Ave	Matarese Kimberly A Est and Matarese, Scott E	Ulhaq, Ehsan	1/5	\$410,000
38 Amherst Rd	Orsini Evelyn D Est and Revens Jr, John C	Next Prop LLC	12/29	\$365,000
40 Mason Ave	Lamphere, James M	Hernandez, Sihorell and Longoria, Erin	1/5	\$433,000
47 Richland Rd	Kohm Frelt and Kohm, Karl A	Rofaeil, Gamil K and Girgis, Soad B	12/29	\$350,000
54 Vincent Way	Tiner, Patrick and Kalim, Upala	O'Neill, Brendan H and O'Neill, Kristen A	12/29	\$555,000
58 Madison Ave Lot 326	Derobbio, Anna	Madonna 2nd, Robert	1/5	\$310,000
58 Madison Ave Lot 325	Derobbio, Anna	Madonna 2nd, Robert	1/5	\$310,000
62 Beacon Cir	Detsitlakidis, Lourdes C	Sider, Eric R	1/4	\$410,000
64 Chestnut Hill Ave	Dilorenzo, Anthony W	Dominguez, Ana M and Dominguez, Roberto	1/4	\$440,000
64 Ferncrest Ave Lot 27	Malloy, Joshua M	Vieira, Jean S	1/3	\$417,000
64 Ferncrest Ave Lot 26	Malloy, Joshua M	Vieira, Jean S	1/3	\$417,000
82 Victory St	Brady, Mary A	Fortier, Ellie	12/29	\$319,000
84 Myrtle Ave	Lgc Hm Improve & Masonry	Goode, Courtney	1/3	\$389,900
98 Wellspring Dr Lot 31	Lefebvre, Marjorie	Pacheco, Fatima and Brown, Alexis	12/29	\$361,200
98 Wellspring Dr Lot 30	Lefebvre, Marjorie	Pacheco, Fatima and Brown, Alexis	12/29	\$361,200
98 Wellspring Dr Lot 28	Lefebvre, Marjorie	Pacheco, Fatima and Brown, Alexis	12/29	\$361,200
98 Wellspring Dr Lot 32	Lefebvre, Marjorie	Pacheco, Fatima and Brown, Alexis	12/29	\$361,200
98 Wellspring Dr Lot 27	Lefebvre, Marjorie	Pacheco, Fatima and Brown, Alexis	12/29	\$361,200
100 Turner Ave	Tedeschi, Paula and Patriquin, Corina	Wu, Cynthia and Webber, Cody	1/2	\$490,000
140 Waite Ave	Miko Hldgs LLC	Froncillo, Nicholas V	12/29	\$500,000
181 Bay View Ave Lot 468	Petrone, Mary E	Hernandez, Silvano	1/2	\$545,000
181 Bay View Ave Lot 467	Petrone, Mary E	Hernandez, Silvano	1/2	\$545,000
190 Warwick Ave Lot 51	Joaquin, Yesmel and Joaquin, Adonis R	Cruz Batista, Edna G	12/29	\$340,000
190 Warwick Ave Lot 30	Joaquin, Yesmel and Joaquin, Adonis R	Cruz Batista, Edna G	12/29	\$340,000
190 Warwick Ave Lot 32	Joaquin, Yesmel and Joaquin, Adonis R	Cruz Batista, Edna G	12/29	\$340,000
190 Warwick Ave Lot 33	Joaquin, Yesmel and Joaquin, Adonis R	Cruz Batista, Edna G	12/29	\$340,000
190 Warwick Ave Lot 50	Joaquin, Yesmel and Joaquin, Adonis R	Cruz Batista, Edna G	12/29	\$340,000
190 Warwick Ave Lot 31	Joaquin, Yesmel and Joaquin, Adonis R	Cruz Batista, Edna G	12/29	\$340,000
200 Mayfield Ave Lot B1	Beckwith, James H	Walters, John and Dorsey, Sandra D	1/5	\$324,000
203 Park Ave	Gately, Brenda	Celeste Concepts LLC	12/29	\$100,000
214 Mapleton St	Czp Prop LLC	Cross, Kimberly	12/29	\$445,000
592 Dyer Ave	Papillon Hm Solutions LLC	Troh, Makoya and Cargoe, Beah M	1/2	\$580,000
1415 New London Ave	Flori Kathleen Est and Flori, Heidi	Forlini, Lynn and Ciorlano, Susan	12/29	\$240,000
2322 Cranston St Lot 532	Whittenberger, Tara N	Medina, Marie F	12/29	\$450,000
2322 Cranston St Lot 531	Whittenberger, Tara N	Medina, Marie F	12/29	\$450,000
2322 Cranston St Lot 530	Whittenberger, Tara N	Medina, Marie F	12/29	\$450,000

## East Greenwich

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
310 1st Ave	Hamm, Andrew W and Hamm, Tracy	Mickey, Christopher J	1/5	\$460,000

## Exeter

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
129 Locust Valley Rd	Blanco, Richard A and Blanco, Pamela A	Garland, Michael and Garland, Hillary	1/5	\$780,000
133 Whispering Pine Way Lot 133	Szklarz, Marion J and Szklarz, Deena M	Szklarz Nt and Conley, Stephanie C	1/3	\$605,000
531 S County Trl Lot 14	Gibson Jr, Vernon R	Simpson, Scott	1/5	\$50,000

## Johnston

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
4 Ligian Ct	Harrison, Timothy S and Harrison, Michael E	Aslan Capital LLC	1/8	\$225,000
4 Rosemont Ave	Skipworth, Shang	Breton, Webert	1/3	\$289,000
4 Rosemont Ave	Pacesetter Properties LLC	Skipworth, Shang	1/3	\$280,000
6 Enfield St	Crowley Ann Est and Basile, Christine L	Hancsarik, Stephen R and Denardo, Kristen L	1/3	\$355,500
47 Morgan Ave Lot 19	Forsee, Charla N	T&a Holdings LLC	1/4	\$255,000
55 Walnut St	Baffoni, John	Island Flippers LLC	1/8	\$345,000
145 Scenery Ln Lot 145	Musumeci Family Lp	Hoyos, Jaime A	1/5	\$250,000
1139 Hartford Ave Lot 8C	Giorgi, Nicholas R	Villarrol, Roxana G	1/5	\$215,000
2774 Hartford Ave	Chery Acres LLC	Mendez, Elizabeth M and Lopez, Jorman	1/4	\$335,000

## Warwick

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
30 Kentucky Ave Lot 629	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
30 Kentucky Ave Lot 627	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
30 Kentucky Ave Lot 625	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
30 Kentucky Ave Lot 628	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
30 Kentucky Ave Lot 626	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
30 Kentucky Ave Lot 624	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
32 Frawley St Lot 129	Oduyngbo, Olatunde	Khamwongsa, Joann and Pholsina, Peter	1/5	\$425,000
32 Frawley St Lot 127	Oduyngbo, Olatunde	Khamwongsa, Joann and Pholsina, Peter	1/5	\$425,000
32 Frawley St Lot 128	Oduyngbo, Olatunde	Khamwongsa, Joann and Pholsina, Peter	1/5	\$425,000
71 Ash St Lot 133	Halligan, Robert J	Brennan, Joseph	1/3	\$249,900
71 Logan St	Pnc Bank Na	Thomas Gerald LLC	1/2	\$116,000
101 Hillard Ave	Giles, Hillary J	Guilmain, David	1/5	\$425,000
161 Edaville Ct Lot 161	Kinzer, Susan M	Fitzpatrick, Susan	1/5	\$300,000
200 Post Rd Lot 224	Gaudette, Jennifer J	Mckittrick, Juliana	1/5	\$235,000
200 Post Rd Lot 621	Lopes William R Est and Lopes, Christopher D	Famador, Ma L and Rodriguez, Faridah T	1/4	\$230,000
202 Haswell St	401homebuyers LLC	Sousas Houses To Hm LLC	1/3	\$220,000
204 Missouri Dr	Meservey, Andrew P and Meservey, Roberta	Sanyang, Momodou	1/4	\$340,000
206 Reynolds Ave	Laprade, Ernest R and Pacheco, Raymond L	Chen, Chen and Zhong, Binqiang	1/2	\$385,000
220 Old Forge Rd	Armstrong, Patricia and Armstrong, David	Carney, Nolan W	1/5	\$361,000
393 Warwick Neck Ave	Jeffrey A & Sally A Smith and Butler, Jeffrey A	Cahoon, Christopher A and Izzo, Laura D	1/5	\$565,000
568 Cole Farm Rd	Rideout, Dale W and Almqist, Glenn	Rideout, Taylor and Carden, Athony	1/2	\$375,000
1105 Main Ave	Vient, Jean M and Vient, Kathryn M	Ali, Sherif F	1/3	\$380,000
1640 Post Rd Lot 623	Confreda, Theresa E and Adams, Louann	Confreda, Vincent J	1/4	\$175,000
4158 Post Rd Lot 9	Shiann-Hsiung Liu Lt and Liu, Shiann-Hsiung	Liu, John K	1/2	\$73,600

## West Greenwich

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
24 Wood River Ln	Henriques, John M and Henriques, Lisa M	Smith, Jacob P and Smith, Tori A	1/4	\$650,000
92 Mohawk Trl	Moss Home Solutions LLC	Elevator Prop LLC	1/3	\$280,000

## West Warwick

ADDRESS	SELLERS	BUYERS	DATE	PRICE
11 N Gate Dr	Casade Funding Mtg T Hb3	Vasquez Properties LLC	1/5	\$250,000
11 Silver Cup Cir Lot 11	Nepaul, Aaron	Conti, Michael	1/9	\$355,000
26 Woodside Ave	Chabot, Alexandra E	Best Life Homes LLC	1/8	\$205,000
27 Cowesett Ave Lot A1	Nguyen, Minh T	Blais, Michael and Marsella, Emily	1/9	\$191,000
62 Coit Ave	Ferrara, Tyler J and Ferrara, Carley	Wood Jr, John P and Wood, Susan S	1/5	\$380,000
223-225 Providence St	Fanfara Jr, Robert E and Burdick, Raymond K	Barney, Michael	1/8	\$540,000
255 E Greenwich Ave	Laurie H Masterson RET and Masterson, Laurie H	Adams, Richard D and Adams, Paula D	1/5	\$525,000

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## Using Experimental Archaeology to Learn More About Flintlock Firearms, Part I



**By Joel Bohy**  
Historic Arms & Militaria  
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custom-built reproductions of many flintlock fowling pieces, carbines, and muskets we could use for a study. In 2015 after the project was over, we set a date and spent three days shooting, metal detecting each fired ball, and recording all of the data. The next year we planned another and collected more data. All of this we published for historians and archaeologists to use.

In late 2019 while visiting the Jason Russell house in Arlington, Massachusetts and looking at the bullet holes from April 19, 1775 in the house, we decided a study was in order to verify if they were indeed bullet holes, and if we could find more. This led to a study of all of the remaining structures and objects that had bullet holes related to the first day of the Revolution. Then COVID hit and slowed things down a bit. We were still able to keep working on the project, but visits and live-fire studies were not



in the cards. During that down time, we were able to do a lot of research and start to organize the information. We decided we needed to do another live-fire validation study and replicate some of the shots that we had recorded.

I was able to collect some of the materials we wanted to shoot and prepare for when we could get folks together and out to shoot. We had 18th century house sections built from original materials which dated to about the same time of some of the original structures. Since we recorded three indoor house shutters which had been shot in 1775, we also needed to find a shutter. One that had been reproduced in the late 19th or early 20th century was found and set aside. James Hayward of Acton had been shot through his powder horn on April 19, 1775, and we wanted to try and replicate that, if indeed we could hit the horn, so I found two plain antique horns cheap at shops and set them aside.

We were also able to get a grant from the American Society of Arms Collectors Foundation to help fund the live-fire study. Renting high-speed cameras costs money, as does getting a videographer and traveling to Massachusetts for the study.

The next step was finding a location to shoot and after reaching out to the Whitinsville Fish and Game Club in Douglas, Massachusetts, they agreed to let us hold the study there over a two-day period.

In my next article, I'll talk about the live-fire study we had on two cold December days last year!

**B**ack in 2013 during an archaeology project I was volunteering on, we were finding musket balls from the first day of the American Revolution. I remember during a break talking to archaeologist Doug Scott. He had done live-fire studies of arms related to the Civil and Indian Wars, but he mentioned how it would be really interesting to study the exterior ballistics of Revolutionary War small arms. I happened to have a collection of contemporary



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## Buying your first home – what you need to know

By Jennifer Cosgrove O’Leary

**B**uying your first home can be exciting, terrifying, and thrilling – often all at once! The numerous decisions and unfamiliar terms that come with the process, such as interest rates, mortgage insurance, pre-approval...the list seems endless, but with the right guidance you can make it through the process with flying colors.

Having guided hundreds of people through the home buying journey, first-time home buyers hold a special place in my heart. I recently worked with a young couple who were determined to find their first home. Tired of throwing their money away on rent, (which is basically 100 percent interest) but concerned they didn’t have enough money for a down payment, they were discouraged. At our very first meeting, we spent some time strategizing about what they needed to do. I

was able to connect them with a mortgage broker who understood their situation and within a month they were able to buy the home of their dreams.

Following are some tips that will help you as you prepare to embark on your home buying journey. And, if you need some more advice, please join us for a first-time home buyers workshop – details below.

**1. Financial Preparation:** Before diving into the real estate market, it’s crucial to assess your financial readiness. Take a close look at your budget, evaluate your credit score, and consider meeting with a mortgage advisor to determine a comfortable budget for your first home.

**2. Work with a Realtor:** Engaging the services of a qualified real estate agent can make the entire process smoother. An agent is your best source of information about current real estate market trends in your desired location. Are you entering a buyer’s or seller’s market? An experienced agent will understand your needs, negotiate on your behalf, and guide you through the paperwork maze – which can often seem a bit overwhelming.

**3. The Importance of Pre-Approval:** Getting pre-approved for a mortgage is a game-changer. It not only gives you a clear understanding of your budget but also makes your offer more appealing to sellers. Your real estate agent can connect you with lenders who can find the best mortgage option for your situation.

**4. Long-Term Vision:** When selecting your first home, consider its long-term potential. Is it a property that can accommodate your future needs? Thinking ahead will save you from outgrowing your space too quickly.

**5. Patience is a Virtue:** Finding the perfect home takes time, and the process may involve a few twists and turns. Be patient, stay focused on your goals, and trust that the right property will come along.

Remember, you’re not alone in this journey. Your dream of homeownership is within reach, and with careful planning and guidance, you’ll soon be opening the door to a place you can truly call your own.



First-time home buyers Jeremy and Rebecca stand in front of their first home

Need more advice on buying your first home? Please join us for a first-time home buyers workshop which will be held in our office February 15 at 5:30. Stop by for some advice and snacks. Come get your questions answered! Please contact me at [jen@greenwichbaybrokers.com](mailto:jen@greenwichbaybrokers.com) for details on the workshop or questions on buying your first home.

Happy house hunting!

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** *Jennifer Cosgrove O’Leary is one of the top 10 Realtors® (as certified by Real Trends) in the state of Rhode Island and the Co-Owner/Broker of Greenwich Bay Brokers. She is the only Certified Divorce Real Estate agent in the state, and is also a Senior Real Estate Specialist. Jennifer leverages her years of interior design experience, as well as her degree in occupational therapy to provide guidance on the critical aesthetic and ease of use elements that are part of the home buying and selling process.*



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[GreenwichBayBrokers.com](http://GreenwichBayBrokers.com)



# Home Exterior Trends for 2024

FAMILY FEATURES

A home's exterior is often the first thing guests or potential buyers see, meaning its curb appeal can have a significant impact on making a good first impression. Whether refreshing or renovating your home, staying current with exterior trends can help make a statement, increase your home's value and enhance the comfort of your living space.

If you're looking to refresh or improve your home's function and style in the new year, consider these 2024 home exterior trends from the experts at Westlake Royal Building Products, a leader in innovation, design and production of exterior and interior building products including siding, trim, mouldings, roofing, stone, windows, outdoor living and more.

## A Connection with Nature

Connecting people more closely with nature and natural elements, biophilic design can lead to increased well-being and productivity. Growing wellness and environmental concerns are driving demand for outdoor living space improvements and integration of nature in design, including elements like green roofs, living walls and large windows.

You can create dramatic outdoor spaces by contrasting light and dark colors. For example, matte black can be paired with materials like brick, stone, shingles and wood for an eye-catching twist. Bold, earthy tones such as navy blue, forest green, dark brown and red can also be combined with nature-inspired materials for organic texture and warmth. Other trending colors for 2024 include vivid teal and aqua blue, which can induce a sense of serenity.

## High-Performance Siding

As climate change continues to intensify and lead to severe weather, there is a growing need for high-performance, weather-resistant building products. Homeowners continue to favor resilient materials that require less maintenance or replacement such as recycled vinyl, engineered wood and fiber cement, which maintain beauty and function.

Designed with innovation and performance in mind, Select Cellular Composite Siding, a premium PVC siding from Westlake Royal Building Products, replicates the beauty and aesthetics of wood while remaining low maintenance and durable for a lifetime. Featuring a patented interlocking seam design, it keeps moisture out and almost completely eliminates seams. Plus, its Kynar Aquatec coating provides superior protection against ultraviolet rays, reduces energy demands and resists dirt, seasonal staining and insects.



## Functional Outdoor Living Spaces

Focused on creating seamless connections between interior and exterior spaces, this evolution in outdoor design includes integration of outdoor kitchens and living areas. Elements such as fire pits, pizza ovens, outdoor entertainment and games can be incorporated to personalize the space and provide a unique entertaining hub. Using cohesive materials and textures that can withstand the elements and flow from indoors to outdoors, such as stone veneer, can help elevate the space and further tie it to the home's interior.

## Mixed Materials and Textures

Blending various textures, finishes and materials on a home's facade can create a unique, visually dynamic look. Using a combination of materials like brick and vinyl siding or stone and wood can add depth and visual interest. An option like Versetta Stone delivers the authentic look and feel of stone in a panelized format that is easy to install with screws or nails and requires no metal lath or scratch coat. The stone siding features a tongue-and-groove system for perfect spacing, has a built-in rainscreen and can be installed almost anywhere without additional footings for support.

## Transitional Takes on Tradition

A versatile design approach allows a home to transcend trends, ensuring its relevance and appeal over an extended period of time. In 2024, look for a rise in classic design

trends featuring elements such as vertical siding, crisp white trim and other modernized traditional styles as well as a shift away from minimalism that incorporates more nostalgic, personal touches to home exteriors, ushering in more of a transitional style.

Find more ideas to update your home's exterior at [WestlakeRoyalBuildingProducts.com](http://WestlakeRoyalBuildingProducts.com).



**Happy New Year!**  
I wish you all good health and success in 2024

Are you a buyer waiting for interest rates to come down? 2024 is starting with positive news for you!

Homeowners may want to consider making that move to upsize, downsize or transition resulting in an increased supply of single family homes, which is currently below 800.

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