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**CSUITE**  
2021 AWARDS



**CAREER ACHIEVER**  
**MARY E. NOONS | The Washington Trust Co.**

*She credits her success to many 'teachers'*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

# Succeeding through others



**GROWTH IS ESSENTIAL** to survival, in business and life. In the former, the CEO or owner may be the visionary, but it’s C-suite leaders who embody the company ethos and foster

staff growth and buy-in needed for long-term success.

The best have a combination of expertise and selflessness needed to lead in times of crisis, while also reveling in the success of others. For several of this year’s C-Suite Award honorees, such as Mary Halpin, servant leadership is a calling that comes naturally.

“I like getting work done through other people,” said the Centreville Bank senior vice president for human resources.

Ensuring the staff’s success is her mission, and Centreville Bank and its customers are the beneficiaries.

Falvey Insurance Group Ltd. Chief Financial Officer Michael Edwards is a numbers guy but has a similar appreciation for servant leadership and the power of culture it can foster.

Falvey Controller Julie Hencler credits Edwards with developing a “culture of trust” that allows employees and the company to grow together.

That focus on others permeates all C-suite levels, including technology. Christopher Earle, YMCA of Greater Providence director of information systems, has his hands full managing IT for a nonprofit, but is driven by the same service mission as the rest of the staff.

This year’s Career Achiever, Mary E. Noons, knows all about the bottom line value of focusing on group success. The Washington Trust Co. executive vice president and chief retail lending officer was a beneficiary in her elevation to the C-suite and happily continues to pay it forward.

Read on for other examples of leaders who’ve found success by helping others.

Returning for the sixth year as presenting sponsor is KPMG LLP. And joining the C-Suite Awards program this year as partner sponsor is Insperity Inc. We thank them both.

*Michael Mello*

Michael Mello  
Editor

COVER PHOTO  
COURTESY THE WASHINGTON TRUST CO.

# Noons credits success to her many 'teachers'

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer

**IT HAS BEEN** almost 30 years since Mary E. Noons joined **The Washington Trust Co.** and started its secondary marketing department.

During that time, Noons, executive vice president and chief retail lending officer for the Westerly-based bank, has had the opportunity to work with and learn from many people.

"In many ways, I have grown along with the bank. When I started in 1992, there were around 200 employees and we had limited mortgage origination. However, there were many people willing to teach. I was eager to learn and during my tenure, the bank has always been interested in growth," Noons said. "I was given opportunities and learned from a diverse group of talented, knowledgeable people. I think you have to set yourself up for success and avail yourself of the opportunities as they come up."

That type of give-and-take requires a certain amount of flexibility and trust. Over the years, Noons has made the effort to participate in as many things as possible, including volunteering for projects or other work and attending every educational seminar or conference she could find.

"By educating myself and increasing my exposure," she said, "I got on the radar of people who could influence my career. I am very grateful that I worked with high-quality individuals who gave me the chance to grow."

These days, Noons is knee-deep in a major business integration project she describes as building on some of Washington Trust's relationship banking and viewing it from the customer's perspective to ensure the right products and approaches are being offered to add the most value.

"We believe we have so much to offer and

want to improve how we engage with our customers regardless of how they initiate their Washington Trust relationship," Noons said. "The cross-functional project encompasses all business lines and communication channels. Many believe this is the future of banking, particularly community banking, and it's the best way to project benefits to our customers."

Another related project involves partnership building, with Washington Trust identifying or enhancing ways to improve referrals and services awareness between divisions to realize some business cross-pollination benefits before the full integration infrastructure is built.

Al Grant, a Washington Trust mortgage origination senior vice president, said Noons is a natural leader who puts her heart and soul into everything.

"What makes Mary a strong leader? What makes her so strong at her job?" Grant said. "She won't tell you, but I will ... she's brilliant, humble and caring. Mary is process-driven, always with an eye on business sustainability. She has the unique ability to manage to today, the next quarter and the next decade, and she truly cares about all three. She recognizes talent, gives people the latitude to use that talent

*Executive vice president and  
chief retail lending officer*

**DRIVEN TO SUCCEED:** Mary E. Noons, executive vice president and chief retail lending officer at The Washington Trust Co. in Westerly, says she took advantage of seminars and conferences, as well as opportunities to learn from "a diverse group of talented, knowledgeable people."

COURTESY THE WASHINGTON TRUST CO.

and always plays to people's strengths. She truly cares about the well-being of her entire 'work family.' "

A big believer that leadership takes different forms at different times as situations necessitate, Noons also feels that some fundamentals are always present, including being open-minded and honest, respecting people, not shying away from challenges and always taking responsibility for your team.

"When things are tough, or to best prepare for changes in the industry, you need to ask the tough questions, offer the unpopular opinion and stand strong for the things you believe you need for your team, or your business line in general," Noons said. "You can be open and confront issues without being obnoxious. I think you need to do whatever it takes to build the right team and then ensure they know what the mission is at all times."

Humbled and grateful for being honored, Noons is unsurprisingly quick to share the spotlight.

"In good conscience," she said, "I am accepting [this award] on behalf of my team who are the most incredible people I have ever worked with and without whom I would not have been able to have the accomplishments over the past few years." ■

'She recognizes talent, *gives people the latitude* to use that talent and always plays to people's strengths.'

AL GRANT, The Washington Trust Co. mortgage origination senior vice president



# Falvey Insurance Group Proudly Congratulates Michael Edwards

**Chief Financial Officer Winner - 2021 PBN C-Suite Awards**

Mike, we are honored and fortunate to have you as part of our executive team. Your servant leadership and strategic thinking are admired and appreciated by everyone at Falvey. We could not be who we are, nor as successful as we are, without you.



*Michael joined Falvey Cargo Underwriting in September of 2000 as the Corporate Controller. In January of 2003 he assumed the role of Chief Financial Officer where he leads the Finance and Administrative functions of Falvey Insurance Group. During his time with Falvey Insurance Group Mike has managed the company through consistent earnings growth while helping the company maintain its innovative and entrepreneurial spirit.*

*Prior to joining Falvey Insurance Group in 2000, Mike held Financial Analyst positions in two public companies. He also spent two years in Public Accounting earning his CPA designation in 1995. Mike has a B.S. in Accountancy from Providence College and an MBA in Finance and Entrepreneurship from the Olin School of Business at Babson College.*



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# Halpin ensures staff delivers 'Centreville Way'

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer

**YOU MIGHT SAY** Mary Halpin's impressive career in human resources began with being in the right place at the right time.

Halpin began her professional life working in retail, even entering into a training program with Boston-based department store chain Jordan Marsh.

"During a busy Christmas season, they asked me to do all the seasonal hiring for the store, and as a result I became part of the human resources team," Halpin said. "I found that I loved it, as I could marry my love of the business with my desire to help impact it through people."

Following a three-year stint with global financial services provider State Street, Halpin spent more than 18 years as vice president of human resources at Fidelity Investments Inc. before accepting a position with **Centreville Bank** as senior vice president, human resources, in 2019.

Today, Halpin focuses much of her effort on helping the West Warwick-based bank recalibrate its culture to help Centreville achieve its long-term business goals.

"We started by establishing our common purpose, or the reason why we come to work every day," Halpin said. "From that, we have gone on to build the 'Centreville Way,' which is the behaviors and actions that we think are essential to driving us toward delivering on our purpose. Over the last two years, my team and I have continued to develop further tools for employees to use to make sure they are always delivering against our common purpose."

As part of this work, Halpin said, the bank is working with an outside company to create a diversity, inclusion and equity program. Hal-

pin feels this is an important part of honoring Centreville's customers and employees and being an active member of the community.

Following Centreville's acquisition of Putnam Bank last May, Halpin led the HR process to ensure that the bank was able to successfully integrate Putnam's employees. After interviewing all nonretail employees to gauge fit within the organization, she presented senior management with the proposed organization, including the budget impact to the bank.

"Once a final decision was made, I managed the offer process for the bank employees," Halpin said. "I created an online version of our orientation, and all employees who were part of the acquisition attended one of several sessions we offered to ensure that everyone was aware of culture, mission and values of the organization. We created a place on our internal website that highlighted all the benefits to employees and customers to becoming part of the new bank and it allowed employees to feel more a part of the organization right from the beginning."

Community development representative Paola Fernandez said Halpin joined Centreville

*Senior vice president, human resources*

**LARGE PRIVATE COMPANY**

**VALUE ADD:** Mary Halpin, senior vice president, human resources, at Centreville Bank, conducted interviews, oversaw the offer process and created an online orientation to successfully integrate employees from Putnam Bank following its acquisition by Centreville. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

at a very important time in the bank's evolution and has pushed the organization forward.

"Since joining Centreville, Mary has laid the groundwork on multiple initiatives that are critical to the ongoing growth of the bank," Fernandez said. "She empowers employees and is a constant voice of encouragement and support, offering thoughts, ideas and suggestions that always help sustain momentum and focus on our organizational objectives. She demonstrates appreciation of each person's contribution to the team and fosters open and respectful discussion of diverse perspectives, ideas and thoughts, all while maintaining a great sense of humor."

Halpin believes the most important part of her job is to be a strong leader – both to the bank's employees and her team.

"I believe in being a servant leader, working for the employees of the bank and my group, knowing what they need to be successful and helping them find that," Halpin said. "I love helping people succeed. I am an extrovert by nature, and I like getting work done through other people. I find that to succeed through others, you have to ensure that everyone you work with is at their best, and so I make it my mission to help people achieve what it is they need to be the very best." ■

*'I make it my mission to help people achieve what it is they need to be the very best.'*

**MARY HALPIN, Centreville Bank senior vice president, human resources**



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## Congratulations Stu Kiely



2021 PBN C-Suite Award Winner  
Chief Information/Technology Officer





# Digital transformation pays off at Matouk

BY MARY HOWE | Contributing Writer

**THE PANDEMIC YEAR OF 2020** kept millions of people at home, and many of them decided they wanted to roost in the company of luxurious, high-quality bath, bed and table linens.

For **John Matouk & Co.**, the Fall River-based manufacturer of fine linens, 2020 brought a huge upswing in sales.

Although nobody at Matouk saw the COVID-19 pandemic coming, a program of digital transformation that the company began planning in 2015 placed it in a position to work even more efficiently at a time when managers were scattered to their homes and each day brought new challenges.

Stuart Kiely, Matouk's vice president of digital strategy for the past eight years, helped steer the two-year process of digital transformation, which went live in January 2017. The transformation pulled the company's functions out of their digital silos and unified them under a single management platform. Kiely watched the greater transparencies and efficiencies dramatically prove their value over the past year.

Gross revenue at Matouk rose from \$37.9 million in 2019 to \$57.4 million in 2020, the company reports. Retail sales conducted directly through the website Matouk.com – which does not include sales through retailers such as Bloomingdale's or Nordstrom – doubled in the past year, Kiely said, to \$15 million.

"We hired Stu years ago primarily to run and build our e-commerce," said George Matouk, the company's president. "But over time it became clear that we stood to benefit from a radical transformation of our IT [information technology]."

Matouk added, "Stu ... understood early on that digital tools, access to data and a new mindset would lead to [a] competitive advantage through a cloud-based system."

In March 2020, when the news of COVID-19 was spreading into the United States and shutdowns began, the company moved into making face masks. It "allowed us to contribute to the cause," Kiely said, and allowed the factory to keep functioning in the early spring.

Ultimately, over the course of 2020, Matouk said, his company made 300,000 face masks, giving away 100,000 to schools or medical facilities and selling the remaining 200,000 at manufacturing cost.

Then, last May, retail sales of the bed and bath lines made by the 90-year-old company began to boom.

"People were thinking, 'If I am going to be stuck at home, I am going to make it really beautiful,'" Kiely said.

The pandemic hit the U.S. just a little more than three years after the 2017 launch of the company's massive transformation. The process uses the Salesforce.com customer relationship management platform and its Rootstock manufacturing resources planning system.

The digital transformation involved "uprooting every business system in the organization and migrating them to a modern-day platform," Kiely said. That includes finance,

**SMOOTH SAILING:** Stuart Kiely, vice president of digital strategy for John Matouk & Co. in Fall River, steered a two-year digital transformation of the company's operations, which allowed it to boost retail sales and gross revenues in 2020.

PBN PHOTO/KATE WHITNEY LUCEY

inventory, purchasing, forecasting, customer relations and human resources.

This project is intended to fix the problem of data siloing, when various business functions are operated by different programs, making it difficult for functions to communicate and collaborate with each other. The information lives in the cloud, stays updated and uniform, and is accessible by Matouk workers in any location.

At the manufacturing plant, Salesforce allowed the automation of some formerly physical actions. For instance, Rootstock allowed sales orders to be generated and conveyed to the warehouse electronically.

Using Salesforce and Rootstock was enormously valuable to fulfill orders during the pandemic year, but their value was proven much earlier. In an April 2018 blog post, Rootstock reported – and Kiely confirmed – that Matouk's return on investment rose by 223% during a previous six-month period. Kiely said this was partly because the digital efficiencies allowed the company to manage and control inventory much more effectively, moving in the direction of a just-in-time inventory system.

George Matouk is grateful for the business acumen and personal kindness of employees such as Kiely. "He is just a great person; he goes above and beyond to help other people achieve their business goals," he said. ■

*Vice president of digital strategy*

**LARGE PRIVATE COMPANY**

*'He goes above and beyond to help other people achieve their business goals.'*

**GEORGE MATOUK, John Matouk & Co. president**



# Congratulations from all your colleagues at Washington Trust!



*Mary E. Noons*

Executive Vice President,  
Chief Retail Lending Officer



Washington Trust congratulates **Mary Noons** for being recognized with Providence Business News' **2021 "Career Achiever" C-Suite Award.**

Mary's leadership, innovation, and commitment to excellence in the workplace make her truly deserving of this top honor.



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# Sullivan's tenacity leads to many RIMI innovations

BY MARY HOWE | Contributing Writer

**IN HER 11 YEARS OF WORK** at Rhode Island Medical Imaging Inc., including the past two as chief operating officer of clinical operations, Siobhain Sullivan has built a long and hefty list of completed projects.

She attributes the mountain of accomplishments to a single factor: "I was extremely eager."

Other contributors to Sullivan's work ethic include the discipline of five years in the U.S. Air Force, where she started her career as a radiographer, and the effort it took to earn three degrees. Among them were a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Rhode Island and an MBA from Salve Regina University.

One of Sullivan's more recent challenges was to prepare employees at RIMI's clinical offices to keep themselves and their patients safe from COVID-19, while keeping operations uninterrupted.

Sullivan said when COVID-19 guidelines were issued by the government in early 2020, the company quickly found and allocated personal protective equipment and developed techniques to reduce harm, such as online patient screening before appointments and limits on face time in the clinics.

When the pandemic started, "keeping morale up was very important," Sullivan said.

RIMI has a network of 12 private state-of-the-art medical diagnostic imaging facilities, a number that has more than doubled, from five, since Sullivan came onboard in 2010. The clinics are staffed by more than 80 board-certified radiologists. The number of RIMI employees has risen from 490 people in 2018 to 539 in 2020.

Sullivan began working with RIMI as lead CT technologist, managing a dozen people

across RIMI's then five facilities. A series of promotions moved her up the management chain through 2019, when she became chief operating officer of clinical operations, overseeing the work of 300 employees.

Dr. John A. Pezzullo, president of RIMI, confirmed Sullivan's driving work ethic and said her demeanor toward the staff is always supportive and respectful. "I have never seen Siobhain lose her cool or talk down to anyone," Pezzullo said. "She's a class act."

Noting that Sullivan oversees all aspects of the clinical operations, Pezzullo said, "Without her personal contribution, the growth at RIMI of the last six or seven years would not be where it is."

Among the major projects Sullivan led was accreditation by the American College of Radiology as a Center of Excellence, the gold standard in medical imaging and the first outpatient facility in the country to achieve this distinction. Qualifying as a Center of Excellence also required Sullivan to initiate the company's first-ever quality assurance program. She says this exercise improved services across

Chief operating officer  
of clinical operations

LARGE PRIVATE COMPANY

**TOP QUALITY:** Siobhain Sullivan, chief operating officer of clinical operations at Rhode Island Medical Imaging Inc., initiated the company's first quality assurance program, which she says improved services across the organization, ultimately benefiting patients. PBN PHOTO/TRACY JENKINS

the organization, ultimately conveying benefits on patients.

In other projects, Sullivan created an advanced mammography program, now offered at 10 RIMI locations, using advanced 3D screening, which is extra effective in finding abnormalities. She instituted 3T MRIs, which are helpful for claustrophobic people and which return high-quality images in shorter scan times. She also introduced the i-STAT blood analysis system, which quickens the turnaround of blood test results.

Sullivan moved the company into the MedInformatix system, which improved scheduling, registration, workflow and tracking functionality. She helped the company move into a new headquarters in Warwick, with a full gym for employees. Sullivan also spearheaded various types of training, including customer service, basic life support CPR training and venipuncture training.

Sullivan acknowledged that she has worked through a lot of projects, but she said her greatest day-to-day satisfaction on the job is to guide and encourage other people on the staff as they develop their own skills and impact on the company.

"Someone saw something in me and that made me able to move up and do more," she said. "It makes me happy to see growth by someone when they have a chance at a new position. I try to remember to keep an eye on new people and to think, 'How can I help them succeed in this business if that is what they want?' " ■

'Without *her personal contribution*, the growth at RIMI of the last six or seven years would not be where it is.'

DR. JOHN A. PEZZULLO, Rhode Island Medical Imaging Inc. president





Mary Halpin  
Senior Vice President, Human Resources

## We're proud to celebrate Mary's PBN C-Suite Award.

She truly deserves it...  
for so many jobs, so well done.

Every aspect of our business, and every one of our employees, has benefitted from Mary's human resources expertise and dedication to her job. And many communities and individuals have benefitted from her service to a wide variety of causes and organizations. We're proud that Mary is part of the Centreville Bank family.

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We are proud of Cortney Nicolato's leadership in uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.





# Making profitable waves at Falvey

BY PAUL E. KANDARIAN | Contributing Writer

**THE RIGHT FIT:** Michael Edwards, chief financial officer for Falvey Insurance Group Ltd. in North Kingstown, says the company has found a nice niche in a hard market period, as it's been able to grow its revenue 60% in the past three years.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

**FALVEY INSURANCE GROUP LTD.** in North Kingstown has grown its revenue 60% over the past three years, which Chief Financial Officer Michael Edwards credits to the company's culture and doing the right thing.

"We have a strong culture here, it's been going on for years and it's really our mantra," said Edwards, who joined the firm in 2000 as its corporate controller. "Just keep doing the right thing. That's it. There's really no secret formula. It's just constantly getting out to the brokers, getting the right clients and servicing them."

Falvey has also benefited from specializing in high-tech and life sciences, Edwards said. The company has six offices across North America and another in London that opened in 2017, all of which provide local policy issuance in more than 160 countries.

"In a hard market period with price increases, we're in a nice niche for the last few years," he said. "We're riding the wave but doing the right thing consistently and being in a position to ride that wave."

In 2020, Falvey grew its revenue to more than \$24 million annually, from under \$15 million in 2018, all while driving down expenses by 22% and increasing profitability.

"Mike Edwards is frankly the best CFO for a midsize company in Rhode Island, and his leadership and foresight have given me the ability and freedom to be entrepreneurial and grow the company," said J. Michael Falvey, the company's founder and CEO. "His cash management and budgeting skills have allowed FIG to not only grow but to reduce debt and increase our

profit margins from 3.94% to 39.48% in the last three years."

Edwards was on the same page with the boss from the outset, Falvey said. The Providence College undergrad also has his MBA in finance and entrepreneurship from the Olin School of Business at Babson College.

"I kind of fell for the entrepreneurial bug and was in the middle of getting my MBA when I realized I might not be the best entrepreneur but definitely wanted to work in the entrepreneurial setting," Edwards said. "I found that best setting with Mike Falvey. The timing was right and I'm happy to have been able to help him grow the company."

The COVID-19 pandemic has hamstrung many companies' productivity, but not Falvey's, Edwards said.

"We've always put a lot of emphasis on technology and our relationships, so as we got into the pandemic, we were ready to work from home, and since those relationships were so strong with the right brokers and organizations, we didn't need to cold call or do introductions that are hard to get into in a pandemic," Edwards said.

Edwards is quick to share credit with others

*Chief financial officer*

**SMALL PRIVATE COMPANY**

of the company's success, including with Controller Julie Hencler and the accounting team.

"They're terrific, and all of them came into Falvey at the entry level. They didn't skip steps; they've worked their way up," Edwards said. "I take a lot of joy in the success they've seen here."

Roxanne Nelson, director of people operations at Falvey and a 20-year colleague of Edwards, said, "Mike never offers his opinions without first asking for your thoughts, which leads to more meaningful discussions and solutions that may not have been accomplished at first."

Edwards has made an impact on company lingo as well. According to Jack Falvey, chief operating officer, it's not uncommon for other senior leaders "to use Mike's terminology a few years after he first speaks them into existence, including servant leadership, balance score-card approach, and customer-focused solutions, to name a few."

Hencler credits the "culture of trust" Edwards has built with employees as a reason for longevity, as his staff's average tenure is eight years, with a retention rate of over 80%, she said.

"I find that people stay here," Edwards said, "because they come looking for jobs and finding careers." ■

'His cash management and *budgeting skills* have allowed FIG to not only grow but to reduce debt and increase our profit margins.'

**J. MICHAEL FALVEY, Falvey Insurance Group Ltd. founder and CEO**





**Christopher Earle**  
Director of Information Systems,  
YMCA of Greater Providence



The Y is so much more than a gym and swimming pool, and Christopher Earle is a shining example of this. On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff and members,  
*we congratulate Chris on this outstanding recognition*  
and thank Providence Business News for their support!

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# Earle's skills go beyond technology at YMCA

BY MATTHEW ENRIGHT | Contributing Writer

**YMCA OF GREATER PROVIDENCE** Director of Information Systems Christopher Earle's importance to his organization goes beyond keeping the Providence-based nonprofit's information technology online.

Earle's time with the YMCA began in 2013 when he was hired as a consultant to help with budgetary matters. "It was my first real exposure to nonprofits, and I wasn't sure if it was going to be there for a long time but really enjoyed the work I was doing and the people I was with," he said.

Earle was hired full time by the YMCA in January 2014. It hasn't been just about the technology for Earle, as he's managed to find new opportunities and enjoyed new challenges, including participating in other projects such as decommissioning sites and property sales.

"One thing that's really grasped me at the Y is the mission and the people that we serve," he said. "I get that I'm in IT [information technology], but I always am thinking about our members and our staff, how we can help them, how we can give them better tools to do what they do."

Earle also is one to not take sole credit of his accomplishments at the YMCA.

"I think any recognition that I would ever receive is really a reflection on the folks that I work with," he said.

CEO Steven O'Donnell had nothing but praise for Earle's work and versatility at the YMCA.

"He's super gifted in information systems and technology, but I've utilized him in other

things well beyond IT," he said, highlighting Earle's work on helping to sell property, as well as his work on budgeting. "When we do budgets, he not only brings in the IT piece, he brings in the analytical view on how we do our budget, which is very helpful, analyzing how we set budgets, set restraints."

Among Earle's work on budgeting is teaching the various branches run by the YMCA of Greater Providence to create and stay within their budget, O'Donnell said.

"He just does so much more than a typical IT person, and his typical IT function, he's superb at that also," O'Donnell said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Earle again proved his worth to the YMCA. With a serious reduction in staff and facilities closing, the organization had to reopen strategically as conditions improved.

*Director of information systems*  
**NONPROFIT/SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY**

**JUGGLING ACT:** Christopher Earle, director of information systems for the YMCA of Greater Providence, has been called upon to perform duties beyond his core responsibilities.  
PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

"He constantly is analyzing that data and pushes it down to the team and helps them understand that data, how that impacts us positively and negatively," O'Donnell said.

With the advent of Zoom and meetings needing to be done remotely, Earle stepped up to keep things running smoothly. He said that while it was surreal to see YMCA buildings closed, there were already some things that worked to the organization's advantage, such as having a number of users in the cloud and having a good virtual private network.

"I think our readiness for something that we never could have ever foreseen, it was nice to see that the work that we had been doing put us in as good of a place as we could be leading up to that," Earle said. "And then when it really took off last March, we were able to continue to adapt and be flexible, knowing that the Y is not necessarily a place where we have the most tech-savvy staff, and so just making sure that we were supporting people in a way that they could still do what they needed to do."

O'Donnell said he thinks Earle has a lot of potential to grow within the YMCA.

"He's a leader, he's relied upon not just by me but by my staff, staff well below," he said. "He leads by example, and that's really the best type of leadership in my opinion." ■

*'He's super gifted in information systems and technology, but I've utilized him in other things well beyond IT.'*

STEVEN O'DONNELL, YMCA of Greater Providence CEO





# Ballet positioned McPherson's pivot to NMH

BY PAUL E. KANDARIAN | Contributing Writer

**AS A FORMER PROFESSIONAL BALLET DANCER**, Edward McPherson always knew where his feet should land on the job. But taking over as director of marketing and fund development for **Newport Mental Health** in February 2020, just one month before the COVID-19 pandemic fully gripped the world, he found himself like everyone else, landing with both feet on very unfamiliar turf.

"I had no idea of the scope of the work that would unfold," said McPherson, 34, a California native who had been executive director of the Island Moving Co. in Newport prior to his current job. "Typically, fundraising and marketing practices carry over between industries, but those playbooks were almost useless when COVID-19 began."

Raising money for a nonprofit isn't easy even in the best of times, McPherson said, adding, "You can't raise money if you don't know what the organization needs, and our clinical team didn't miss a beat; they gave our team all the information we needed to make a case for supporting us."

It worked. Newport Mental Health's 2020 gross revenue was roughly \$8 million. In 2019, it had been \$2 million, and \$1.5 million in 2018. Additionally, it has grown from 80 employees in 2018 to 140 currently, which includes therapists, counselors and psychiatrists.

"The element of crisis created opportunities that I may not have had so readily," McPherson said. "The crisis allowed me to get with the management team quickly."

McPherson's ballet career was one in a field of tremendous dedication, competition and not just physical demands but mental ones too. He recounted his experience at the Interlochen

Arts Academy in Michigan, where a mentor "took the time to empower me with the tools to take care of my mental health. Too often, we only think about mental health when we are in crisis," he said.

He also spent five years as the program and education coordinator of the Midland County Public Library system in Texas, which helped form the foundation he'd need in his current job. He began setting up an infrastructure at Newport Mental Health to capture and analyze constituent and performance outcomes.

"Taking an evidence-based approach is so important, not only from a fundraising perspective but especially in our marketing landscape," McPherson said. "Internal stakeholders understand what we do and why it's important because we share the data behind it."

Through the pandemic, on its way to raising a record amount of money, Newport Mental Health reached county residents, he said, "with accurate, informative, uplifting and positive mental health messaging 1,096,981 times."

As part of the agency's effort to be more

*Director of marketing and  
fund development*

NONPROFIT/SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY

**REACHING OUT:** Edward McPherson, director of marketing and fund development for Newport Mental Health, says he was drawn to fundraising because it pairs people who can change the world with those people who need it.

PBN PHOTO/TRACY JENKINS

proactive in an industry that is most often reactive, McPherson said, the organization is partnering with the Newport County Prevention Coalition on a pilot program through the state to get cellphones to 25 senior citizens who are caregivers to their grandchildren and who don't have internet service at home.

"They'll have access to their grandchildren's doctors and other support connections to health care," he said.

Regarding goals for Newport Mental Health, McPherson said, "I was brought in to build a team to address long-term financial challenges that all mental health care providers face in an industry plagued by instability. My job is not finished until we have a thriving philanthropic program to round out what we already have, to reach sustainability and alleviate long-term fear" of lack of funding.

"Despite the pandemic interrupting all of our planned fundraising events," said Jamie Lehane, the agency's CEO and president, "Edward's expertise and ability to innovate was amazing. He pivoted to not only maintain our fundraising efforts but to grow them."

McPherson said he was "drawn to fundraising because it pairs people who have the ability to change the world [with] those people who need it. It allows me to reach those people. I can't see anything better than that. I reached my dream and I want to make that happen for others." ■

'Edward's expertise and *ability to innovate* was amazing. He pivoted to not only maintain our fundraising efforts but to grow them.'

JAMIE LEHANE, Newport Mental Health CEO and president





# Nicolato leads with 'bold energy'

BY JENNIFER L. GRYBOWSKI | Contributing Writer

**THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN DIFFICULT** for most, but under CEO and President Cortney Nicolato's leadership, the **United Way of Rhode Island's** community support never wavered.

"The United Way has been long known to step up in times of need in our community," Nicolato said. "We are built for this; this is our role."

Nicolato, who spent most of her career in the nonprofit sector, came to the Providence-based organization two years ago.

"There was an expectation bestowed on us by my parents that we would leave the world better than we got it," Nicolato said. "I took that very seriously."

The COVID-19 pandemic didn't slow down Nicolato. Under her leadership, the staff took 255,000 calls to its 211 hotline in 2020 – the most ever received in a 12-month period, and the most calls per capita in the country. The free, confidential call service connects people with needed resources 24/7 year-round.

"She brought such a bold energy to this organization," United Way Chief Resource and Engagement Officer Brooke Havens said. "She's a tremendous visionary who has a real incredible confidence in our capacity to do good. She has been extremely empowering to our organization and we've gained some amazing momentum."

Nicolato also developed and implemented a new, ambitious five-year strategic plan; reorganized the enterprise; deepened United Way's relationship with state leadership; partnered with the Rhode Island Foundation to establish the COVID-19 Response Fund, which raised \$8.5 million during spring 2020; diversified the board of directors to reflect the communities it

serves; brought all staff to a livable wage; and convened a committee to explore the development of a nonprofit management sector.

"One of the things that is really important about a leader is not to be afraid of change or to take a risk, and she is that leader," Havens said. "We are the kind of organization that can make catalytic change, and she has positioned us well to make that change."

Opportunities for change are what keep Nicolato motivated.

"I feel a sense of obligation to this community and to making real transformative change," she said. "That starts with breaking down systemic racism and inequities and injustices in this state. I get to be in a position to support that with all of my being and the resources we have. There are way too many Rhode Islanders who suffer every day but are fighting tooth and nail to thrive. We see that and I get to work with my team to help change lives every day. That's something I don't take for granted."

Nicolato also implemented the 401 Gives Day campaign last year, a statewide day of giving, after participating in a similar initiative with a previous employer in Texas.

CEO and president

NONPROFIT/SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY

**FORCE FOR CHANGE:** Cortney Nicolato, CEO and president of United Way of Rhode Island, says opportunities for change are what keep her motivated, starting with "breaking down systemic racism and inequities and injustices in this state."

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

"It was important to me to figure out how we could build a movement to grow the awareness of the incredible work of the nonprofit sector," Nicolato said. "It is absolutely about raising critical dollars, but more than that it was an opportunity for the nonprofit community to come together and celebrate."

In its second year this year, the campaign raised more than \$2.2 million for local nonprofits on April 1.

"She really spearheaded that campaign," Havens said of Nicolato, "recognizing the nonprofit sector does not have a collective force, something that holds us together as a network."

While United Way was successful in many ways, it also faced challenges this past year. Nicolato credits the generosity of the Rhode Island community for helping get the organization through. She also credits her "#teamunited."

"We have hard jobs, listening every day to Rhode Islanders in need," she said. "We did it with grace, focus and passion. This team was caring for their own families through this and did it without question because our culture and organization is centered in what we call 'community first.' They displayed that every single step of the way. I was proud of them before COVID; I am inspired and awed a year later." ■

'She's *a tremendous visionary* who has a real incredible confidence in our capacity to do good.'

BROOKE HAVENS, United Way of Rhode Island chief resource and engagement officer



# Family Service CFO committed to give back

BY JENNIFER L. GRYBOWSKI | Contributing Writer

**AS CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER** of Family Service of Rhode Island, Phyllis Pelletier directs all monetary operations for the Providence-based nonprofit. But for her, the job is about more than just managing money.

“What makes her so unique as a CFO is it is so evident she lives and breathes the mission,” Family Service CEO Margaret Holland McDuff said. “Everyone recognizes her approach.”

Pelletier grew up in Rhode Island and jumped at the opportunity a dozen years ago to give back to the community that raised her.

“Growing up, giving back was a big deal in my environment; my father was that person who always gave,” Pelletier said. “You grow up with that, and when you get an opportunity to work at a place where giving is their mission, that becomes very important.”

Family Service was struggling financially when Pelletier came on staff, but she was undeterred.

“It seemed like the type of place I’d want to work because they were very forthcoming and honest, and I have never worked with people who are committed as they are,” Pelletier said. “That’s what draws you to nonprofits to begin with: that commitment to give.”

That attitude has led Pelletier to make employee satisfaction one of her highest priorities. She worked to implement annual increases and made sure everyone was getting a fair wage and good benefits options. She also transitioned 300-plus staff from paper to electronic timesheets, converted a new payroll/human resources information system, restructured the employee 401(k) plan and navigated the complicated U.S. Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan.

Pelletier said she is particularly proud of the strength of Family Service’s financials in recent years.

“We have so many funding sources and getting a clean audit is a really proud moment

for me every year,” Pelletier said.

Despite that confidence, she, like many others, was worried about finances at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Every business has its own unique niche to figure out what it is going to take to keep this place going, and for us there was no option,” Pelletier said. “We were going to make it.”

Pelletier appreciates working at an agency that has a good reputation and is strong both financially and clinically.

“I worked really hard for that, but I do not do it alone,” Pelletier said. “I have an excellent staff and I have to give as much credit to my staff because they are really dedicated. I really feel they are one unit. I feel good knowing they want to come to work every day and do as good a job as they do, and that I get to support them.”

Family Service works with several human services and mental health agencies, coalitions and state departments in Rhode Island. McDuff says Pelletier is so skilled at budgeting, analysis and financing models that other heads

*Chief financial officer*

**NONPROFIT/SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY**

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:** Phyllis Pelletier, chief financial officer of non-profit Family Service of Rhode Island, says the example of giving back set by her father when she was young made a big impression on her and led to her wanting to work someplace where she could do the same.  
COURTESY LUCA DEL BORGIO

of these agencies repeatedly ask to consult with Pelletier.

But it’s not just the financials that make Pelletier great at what she does.

“She is always available,” McDuff said. “When you think about mental health, we have people on call 24/7. It’s unusual to have a CFO that operates with that in mind.”

For example, McDuff said, before Family Service had a formal system to support homeless families, Pelletier was there to negotiate rates with hotels to get families rooms for the night.

Pelletier takes it all in stride. She appreciates being able to make a difference every day.

“It’s more about knowing when you get up every day to go to work, your work is important,” Pelletier said. “You are supporting the people that are out there, supporting families that are sometimes at the worst point in their lives, going through crisis, helping out foster care parents. It’s not just going to work; it’s really knowing that at the end of the day, you can say, ‘I supported the staff that are making people’s lives better.’” ■

‘What *makes her so unique* as a CFO is it is so evident she lives and breathes the mission.’

**MARGARET HOLLAND MCDUFF, Family Service of Rhode Island CEO**





# Lattinville forging impressive path

BY MATTHEW ENRIGHT | Contributing Writer

**HALEY LATTINVILLE'S HANDS-ON APPROACH** and eagerness to learn new tasks came in handy when she recognized that the town of North Kingstown had a need in the area of human resources.

On her own initiative, the town employee stepped up.

"The last few years, I had put a lot of hard work into the town, [which] doesn't have a designated HR department, so a lot of the HR duties have been spread out or fell onto the town manager," Lattinville said.

In the nearly five years since she's been working for North Kingstown, Lattinville has taken on several responsibilities and worked to streamline the town's processes and improve employee engagement.

"In doing all of my duties, I had taken all of these tasks because I wanted to learn, and the only way I'm going to learn is by doing them. So, I kind of sat and trained myself on doing all of these," she said.

Starting in payroll, Lattinville said she asked to take over tasks such as benefit enrollment and employee engagement, finding a love for human resources along the way.

"[In] today's day and age and all the social differences we have and everything's changing, HR has become more prevalent, and I decided that I wanted to pursue HR further," she said.

Among the tasks Lattinville has accomplished is creating an employee service portal. This allows employees to view their paychecks and W-2s, view their time-off accruals, update W-4s and other tasks. She has also set up employee assistance programs and training programs for managers and department heads.

It hasn't just been about her work for the town; Lattinville has worked to improve herself. She enrolled at Bryant University and completed the Human Resources Management certificate program. Graduating in May 2020, she then took and passed the Society for Human Resources Management certification test, earning more qualifications in human resources.

North Kingstown Director of Finance James Lathrop, himself a past PBN C-Suite Awards winner, nominated Lattinville for the award because of her consistent improvement and work for the town.

"She showed an attitude that she wanted to be better, and she wanted more. Those are things, especially in the government environment, you don't see often. We're highly unionized; it's hard to move up, and it was just kind of refreshing," Lathrop said. "A lot of people have desires, but to actually put it into action and make it happen, that's kind of impressive. She looked for some guidance, but she really did stuff on her own, and from any kind of managerial position, you love when your staff takes some initiative, recognizes a problem, lets you know about it and then finds a solution

*Personnel manager*

**SELF-STARTER:** Haley Lattinville, personnel manager for the town of North Kingstown, which lacks a human resources department, took it upon herself to learn various HR tasks and responsibilities, which allowed her to guide the town through the COVID-19 pandemic.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

before you even need to get too involved."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was a lot of uncertainty as to what policies and procedures should be followed and maintained, Lattinville again stepped up.

"No one expected or knew what to do with COVID, and she was that person that did the research. 'This is what we can do, this is what we can't do, this is how we should accomplish it,'" Lathrop said. "She just established consistency, and I think that's what most people wanted."

Lattinville said she wants to be a part of any actual HR department that North Kingstown forms in the future.

"I plan on continuing to create and update our policies. Some of our policies are outdated, and I'm going one by one rewriting and making sure everything is compliant," she said. "I plan on continuing to update and create new policies and get everything working."

Lathrop thinks Lattinville has a lot of potential.

"I always look at that Rising Star situation as not just what they've accomplished but what you can see their future projection is," he said. "I really have high hopes and high expectations for her." ■

'She showed an attitude that *she wanted to be better*, and she wanted more. Those are things ... you don't see often.'

JAMES LATHROP, North Kingstown director of finance



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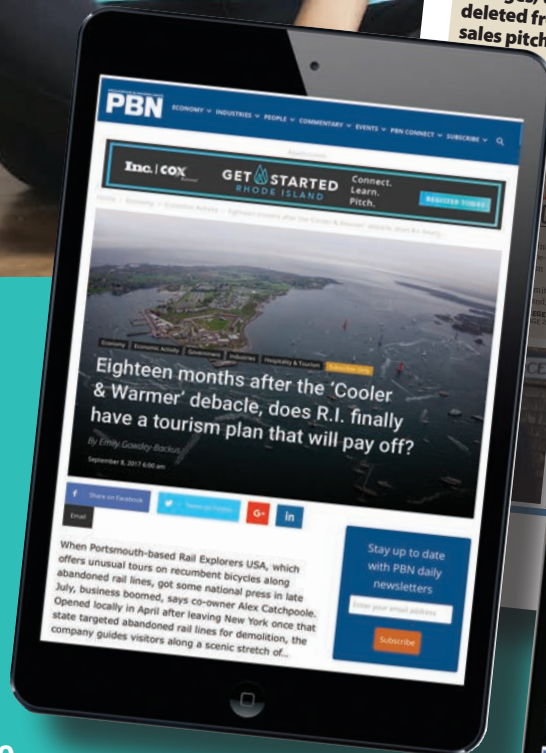
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