

PBN PROVIDENCE BUSINESS NEWS
**BUSINESS
EXCELLENCE**

2017



EMBRACE HOME LOANS

KURT NOYCE

PAGE 6 | PEOPLE-FIRST APPROACH LEADS TO GROWTH,
INNOVATION FOR BUSINESS LEADERSHIP WINNER

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Cox Business is proud to continue its sponsorship of Providence Business News' Business Excellence Awards. Our long-standing support of this venerable program exemplifies our commitment to providing businesses the most competitive voice, video and data services available in this market. We congratulate all of this year's honorees.



Gallo|Thomas is proud to sponsor the 2017 Business Excellence Awards. We congratulate the outstanding group of 2017 honorees and salute your unique attributes and business acumen. Gallo|Thomas is passionate about serving our clients, our employees, and our local community – and delighted to share this special evening with the companies and individuals honored this year.



Partridge Snow & Hahn is proud to congratulate the winners of the 2017 Business Excellence Awards. The dedication, vision, hard work and commitment to business excellence that these winners have shown is exemplary.

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

SUCCESS IN TODAY'S BUSINESS world demands a focus on your market, on your competitors, on innovation, on execution. But for



this year's Business Excellence Awards winners, the focus is much more basic.

"It really is the people," said Stuart R. Benton, CEO and president of The Original Bradford Soap Works Inc.

And he is not alone.

The common theme for all this year's award winners is people, and not as a group but rather as individuals. Embrace Home Loans President Kurt Noyce has been putting his people first for years. The home-financing company's staff has rewarded his efforts by being named one of the Best Places To Work in the state for all 12 years that PBN has been sponsoring the competition. Perhaps more astounding has been the fact that Noyce and his team have earned the award even while growing the workforce by 48 percent in the last three years.

For Bradford Soap's Benton, the company has been encouraging a family atmosphere since before he arrived on the scene in 2011. It's an approach that helps the company continue to evolve, something it has

done throughout its more than 140-year history.

The family approach helps the company engage deeply with the community, while at the same time offering a place for its workers to look forward to coming to each day.

"You can get a paycheck anywhere," said Benton. "You have to have fun at what you are doing."

The Business Excellence Awards are a testament to the region's businesses and executives, but they are also a way in which many of the region's leaders give back to the community. Sponsorship helps PBN produce the BEA program every year, and we salute their participation. Back as presenting sponsor of the Business Excellence Awards for the second year in a row is Blum-Shapiro. Partner sponsors this year are Bryant University's Executive Development Center, Cox Business, Gallo|Thomas Insurance and Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP.

Roger C. Bergenheim
President and Publisher

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KURT NOYCE PRESIDENT, EMBRACE HOME LOANS

LEADERSHIP PRESENCE:
 Embrace Home Loans President Kurt Noyce presents Denise Cunha, assistant vice president and senior human resources coordinator, with a gift certificate to Cardi's Furniture for a new couch and a donation in her to name to Fall River Youth Soccer, in honor of her 15-year employment anniversary.
 PBN PHOTO/KATHRYN WHITNEY LUCEY

Creative, inspiring leadership lets mortgage team flourish

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

IT'S ONE THING TO BE an empowering leader. It's another thing to be a powerful leader in an industry barraged with constant change – such as real estate market volatility – and still find a way to invigorate your team, see creative ways of doing business and mentor others.

Kurt Noyce of Middletown-based **Embrace Home Loans** has been with the company nearly since its inception in 1983, and president for 18 years. The company has thrived under Noyce's leadership.

Embrace – with 800 employees across more than 80 U.S. locations – has been recognized by Providence Business News as one of the state's Best Places to Work every year the program has been in existence. It was named one of the Fastest-Growing Companies in America by Inc. magazine four times. Mortgage Executive magazine has ranked it as a top place to work, and one of the Top 100 Mortgage Companies in America.

In terms of growth, Embrace revenue has grown 69 percent over the past three years, while its workforce grew by 48 percent, according to the company.

This cultural, growth and earnings success comes in part from being in tune to lessons all around us, said Noyce, even at home.

A father of four, ages 13 to 29, Noyce has found that parenting skills are like leadership skills. And the best one, he said, no matter the industry, is a belief in others.

"What distinguishes one firm from another is the experience created for customers. Those experiences come from our staff, and they will model what they see and feel, far more than what they are told," he said. "I have found the same in my household, and that learning has called me to [do] more encouraging, more communicating, more developing, more empowering ... both thrive with that type of sincere, and sustained, investment."

Senior Vice President of Operations Claudia Mobilia says Noyce offers inspirational quotes that often relate to employee challenges.

"Prior to the internet, he would arrive early

to work and print out copies so when staff arrived the printed quotes were on their desks each morning. This is just one of the many trademarks of his investment in the people he leads," she said.

Noyce has also invested in a diverse workplace, where team members feel represented and a spectrum of perspectives can lend fresh insight. Noyce mentors in and outside the company. He is credited with mentoring three women at Embrace who advanced into senior leadership. More than 80 employees have earned accredited coaching designations. He is a mentor for Year Up, an inner-city vocational training program – hosting internships at Embrace – and grade schoolers, through Mentor RL.

This linking of people also translates into strategic alliances.

Noyce engineered an innovative shift in operations in response to regulatory changes within an industry mortgage lenders consider their competition: banking. "Most see banks and independent mortgage bankers as sworn

enemies ... if not that dramatic, then certainly two different approaches to the business," said Noyce.

Embrace opened doors in the B2B realm when Noyce reached out to banks with a potential partnership. He gained their trust. Progress followed. Now, Rockland Trust and Eastern Bank are aligned with Embrace to provide a quality mortgage experience for customers and employees. Each bank continues to be recognized by J.D. Power for customer satisfaction, he said.

The alliance with banks is just one of the changes in 30 years, but technology, regulation, competition and consumers' preferences have also fluctuated. Nothing stays the same. The CEO of Embrace, Dennis Hardiman, is one of the company's pillars, said Noyce. The other is understanding what mortgages are about, which some companies don't.

"Some lose sight of what we are privileged to facilitate. ... They are not loan numbers, or files, they are families. ... We must never forget that."

'What distinguishes one firm from another is the experience created for customers. Those experiences come from our staff.'

KURT NOYCE, Embrace Home Loans president

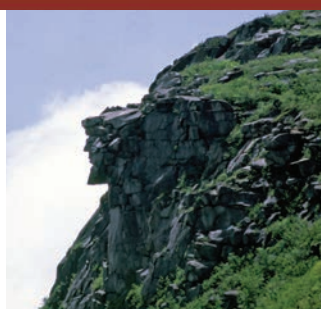
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Dedication to community stretches health outreach

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

“THE ABILITY OF CARE NEW ENGLAND to have a positive impact on the health of all Rhode Islanders, starting with the leadership of Dennis D. Keefe and running throughout the entire organization, [should not] be underestimated,” said Charles Reppucci, executive director and chief operating officer of Hinckley Allen & Snyder LLP, chairman of the board at Care New England.

“Dennis has done a tremendous job ingraining himself into the community while encouraging others throughout Care New England to do the same,” Reppucci said.

Keefe, president and CEO of Care New England since 2011, came from a similar role in the only public hospital in Massachusetts, Cambridge Health Alliance; he also served as that city’s health commissioner.

The third of six children, he is upfront about growing up poor in inner-city Boston. His beginnings – where the existence of nonprofits such as St. Vincent DePaul were a lifeline, he said – give him an intimate understanding of those the health care system he oversees works to help: the uninsured, the underinsured and the disenfranchised.

With seven other entities: Butler, Memorial, Kent, Women & Infants hospitals, plus Care New England Wellness Center, The Providence Center and the VNA of Care New England, Care New England has a lot of ground to cover in terms of community initiatives.

“You have to be committed to these initiatives,”

said Keefe. “If they are connected to the mission, it makes it all fit better. At the end of the day, it’s about balancing scarce hours of availability, keeping organized, keeping to a good schedule. I can multitask and delegate. If you believe in it, you find a way.”

Community benefits delivered by the health care system in 2016 totaled \$118.3 million, according to Care New England’s annual report, most of it to the Medicaid shortfall, education initiatives and subsidized care.

The health system specifically implements programs aimed at increasing access to health information and services; supplementing government programs; and improving public health. Efforts include education and research, outreach programming, subsidized health services and financial assistance. Care New England has longtime affiliations with Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University, which uses facilities at Butler, Memorial and Women & Infants hospitals for psychiatry, primary care and obstetrics, gynecology and neonatology training and research, for example, for

DENNIS D. KEEFE PRESIDENT AND CEO, CARE NEW ENGLAND

DYNAMIC DEDICATION: Dennis D. Keefe, retiring president and CEO of Care New England, speaks with Malinda Caetano, executive assistant, left, and Frances Giatas, executive assistant to Keefe, at their Providence office.

PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

which it has earned national and global recognition.

Collaborative relationships are what make these efforts work, says Keefe.

Community connections – Keefe holds board positions with Rhode Island Quality Institute, Narragansett Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Essential Hospitals Institute and Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce – are well-worth the investment, he says, and take time.

“I would never say I am a personality that fills a room,” he said. “I might be on a committee or project and step back, access information and listen – that can lead to leadership. You can’t barrel into a community and bowl people over, you have to earn that respect.”

Women & Infants Hospital, for example, said Keefe, has had a long-standing bond with March of Dimes, a partner in creating the hospital’s sibling play space in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. The American Heart Association and Care NE also join forces for fundraising and other initiatives. “Engaging with external stakeholders, political leaders, leaders in industry ... the more you establish one-on-one personal relationships, the more successful you’ll be,” said Keefe.

Keefe’s latest efforts involve transitioning his successor, Dr. James E. Fanale, into the role of president and CEO; Keefe is retiring in December.

“The new model of health care delivery works best when there is a strong partnership between providers such as Care New England and the community,” said Reppucci. ■

‘Engaging with external stakeholders, political leaders, leaders in industry ... **the more you establish one-on-one personal relationships, the more successful you’ll be.**’

DENNIS D. KEEFE, Care New England president and CEO



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WELCOME!

Partridge Snow & Hahn is pleased to welcome attorneys Christian Capizzo, David DiSegna, and Allison McDonald to the firm.

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Blue Cross serves the R.I. community nimbly, directly

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

HOLIDAY PARTIES AT Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island look very different than most company gatherings.

In lieu of DJs, fancy dinners and speeches, the nonprofit’s executives and senior-level leaders roll up their sleeves, and help make and serve dinner at Crossroads Rhode Island’s women’s shelter in Providence. This has been the case for the past eight years, and is one of the many ways Blue Cross supports charities in the communities it serves.

The fact that this health insurance company of 800 employees operates independently from its national association allows it to tailor its community programs, charity fundraising, volunteering initiatives and local involvement. Serving more than 400,000 members, it has the power of a national brand behind it, says Carolyn Belisle, managing director of Blue Cross community relations – but remains nimble in serving the community.

“Our company is large enough to make a meaningful difference but small enough to do innovative things ... in the position to help shape new ideas that can benefit people across Rhode Island,” she said.

This innovation includes a multilevel approach to community service.

Not only does the health insurer support its leaders volunteering, it works to create opportunities for employees to volunteer for causes important to them, and to become leaders themselves within nonprofits dear to their hearts.

In what is perhaps its annual, centerpiece event – Blue Across RI – the company creates momentum around a day of service all its own. It coordinates employee volunteers with local nonprofits representing diverse missions who have requested a helping hand. The projects may include painting, yardwork, cleaning or digging for groups such as the Kent County YMCA, the March of Dimes in

Providence or Foster’s Dare to Dream Ranch, for example. Blue Across RI began six years ago, said Belisle.

“It’s a logistical masterpiece,” said Jill Flaxington, public relations specialist at Blue Cross, of Blue Across RI. “The thought that goes into this on Carolyn’s end is just unbelievable.” In addition to connecting projects with volunteers, rain dates need to be planned for each job, for example, at 10 to 13 project sites.

“We’re all over the state, with different missions, different kinds of support ... it’s best if possible to find something that speaks to each of our colleagues,” said Belisle.

Since the office is open on Blue Across RI day, accommodations are required so employees at the headquarters can participate. Meal-package assemblies can be done on-site. The project comes through a partner of United Way of Rhode Island to Blue Cross, said Belisle. “It’s an organization that deals with global hunger, but we ask them to work with some local distributors,” customizing the experience to make it as community oriented as possible.

Another way Blue Cross serves as a conduit between its employees – or “Blue Angel volunteers” – and charities is paid time off for community service. The company’s own partnerships and alliances with other nonprofits keep the channels of

BLUE CROSS & BLUE SHIELD OF RHODE ISLAND

VALUED AND IMPACTFUL: Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island volunteers on-site of the Operation Stand Down project in Johnston. They are sorting through the boots that were part of an in-store promotion by Job Lot, buy boots for a vet and get a gift card. From left, Sindy Guderle, nurse case manager; Gabe Goodine, director business operations; Andrea Camara, medical policy analyst; Sam Burling, senior financial analyst.

PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

‘It’s amazing for employee morale.’

JILL FLAXINGTON,
 Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island
 spokeswoman

communication open on new opportunities.

Beyond volunteerism, employee board service is encouraged and arranged. On-site workshops educate employees about what is involved in making a commitment to serve on a local board of directors.

“We work with the Rhode Island Foundation team to do board referrals,” she said, which involves exploring what an employee is interested in and how much time they can commit, “the nuances for a meaningful board referral. They get back to us with what might be a good fit.” It takes the legwork out of finding that successful match with a new board member and nonprofit in need, Belisle said, with a good match ensuring a more positive experience all around.

In 2016, Blue Cross supported 215 nonprofits with in-kind donations, volunteer hours or contributions, according to its website. More than 8,000 volunteer hours were logged, with \$128,385 in fundraising. And it isn’t just charities that benefit.

“It’s amazing for employee morale,” said Flaxington. “I’ve never felt so valued, impactful and connected to friends and neighbors across the state.” ■



Leaders Serve

The entire Embrace Home Loans community would like to congratulate Kurt Noyce, President of Embrace Home Loans, and Dennis D. Keefe, CEO of Care New England, this year's individual honorees for Business Leadership.

Leadership makes for great companies. It is Kurt's stewardship of Embrace's corporate values that makes for a great leader. Corporate values that enrich the lives of our customers, employees, and business partners.

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AGAINST THE CLOCK: The neuro-interventional team at Rhode Island Hospital finishes performing a thrombectomy procedure on a patient with an acute ischemic stroke. Speeding stroke treatment by minutes can dramatically improve recovery time and results.

COURTESY RICHARD SCHULTZ

BY MICHAEL HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

BECOMING A LEADER in providing health care and in research has been instrumental in allowing **Lifespan Corp.** to succeed in an ever-changing and uncertain industry.

That success has earned Lifespan national recognition, but it's the patients at the nonprofit's hospitals that are reaping the rewards.

"Our focus is on improving the health of our region's residents – from promoting and providing preventive care to investing in leading-edge medical technology," said Dr. Timothy J. Babineau, president and CEO, in an email. "To remain a reliable and stable community resource for the long term ... we must remain focused on business strategies that accelerate strategic market growth while reducing the cost of health care."

Lifespan is Rhode Island's largest hospital system, including Rhode Island Hospital and The Miriam Hospital. It's also the leading private employer in the state with 14,000 employees, which is expected to grow in fiscal year 2018. From 2009 to 2016, Lifespan has increased its workforce by 21.5 percent, compared to the state's growth of 2.3 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Some of the highlights at Lifespan in 2017 have been the unification of cancer care services and research, the opening of the Lifespan Recovery Center to fight against opioid addiction and a substantial investment in Life Chart, Lifespan's electronic health-record platform.

Life Chart allows hospitals and care centers access to a single health record for each patient throughout the system, and helps keep costs down. Babineau calls Life Chart one of the most significant decisions the company has made over the last five years.

With this system, Lifespan has been able to avoid duplication in diagnostic tests; create new analytic capabilities for the most effective protocols for populations of patients with

the same disease/condition; reduce emergency department visits and readmissions; improve workflow, communication and environment for the clinicians; enhance quality and patient outcomes; develop partnerships with like-minded organizations using the same Epic-based system, such as the partnership with the Dana Farber Cancer Institute; and create greater efficiency in revenue.

Rhode Island Hospital's stroke team has received national attention for treating ischemic strokes, the most common type of stroke. The national average from patient arrival to opening the blood vessel is 167 minutes, while at Rhode Island Hospital it is 86 minutes. Time to remove the clot can mean the difference between dying, suffering disability, or recovering. Treatment administered a minute quicker can speed a patient to disability-free recovery a week earlier.

Five clinical trials in 2015 showed a dramatic benefit to the thrombectomy procedure.

"This prompted us to dramatically rethink our workflow to become faster, in order to benefit more patients," said Dr. Mahesh V. Jayaraman, a neurocardiologist at Rhode Island Hospital, in an email. "Our outcomes have been tremendous. We are able to achieve near-complete reopening of the blocked area in almost 90 percent of cases,

and are able to do so typically in less than 30 minutes. For patients who come directly to Rhode Island Hospital, and who are independent prior to treatment, almost two-thirds of those patients treated return to being independent. That's a dramatic improvement over the less than 20 percent chance of being independent without the rapid treatment."

Jayaraman says that based on population estimates, there is one patient per day in the Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts area who could be a candidate.

"We must continually work to find new and more efficient ways to care for our patients, making sure we have the right people who are working in the right place with the right resources," said Babineau.

"As a major academic medical center and research institution, we have the opportunity – the privilege – to be part of great scientific discoveries that will shape health care in the future. Lifespan's goal is not just to keep pace, but to innovate and lead." ■

'Lifespan's goal is not just to keep pace, but to innovate and lead.'

Dr. TIMOTHY J. BABINEAU, Lifespan president and CEO

Congratulations

Hinckley Allen congratulates
Dennis Keefe, Kurt Noyce,
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EXCELLENCE AT A LARGE COMPANY



CLEAN TEAM: Stuart R. Benton, president and CEO of Bradford Soap Works, tours the factory and talks with workers in West Warwick. From left are Blanca Johnson Lopez, packer; Maria Medeiros, group leader; Benton; and Carleen Conklin, machine operator.
 PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

THE ORIGINAL BRADFORD SOAP WORKS INC.

Deft focus wins the specialty soap market

BY MICHAEL HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW The Original Bradford Soap Works Inc. by a label on a product, but you would know the companies that use the Rhode Island company's goods.

Chances are you have used a Bradford Soap Works product in your life, and so did your great-grandfather, great-grandmother, grandfather, grandmother, father and mother. The West Warwick company has been around since 1846.

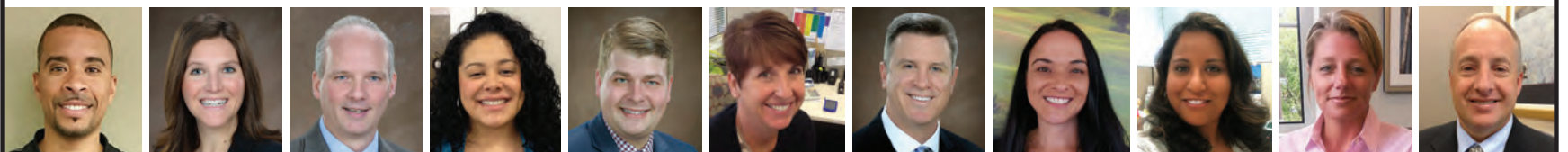
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Bradford is known around the world for being the leading manufacturer of specialty bar soap and shower poufs, produced at its headquarters in Rhode Island and facilities in California and Indiana, as well as through a partnership with a facility in Mexicali, Mexico. Companies including Dove, Target, Bath & Body Works, and Crabtree & Evelyn use the products created by Bradford, owned by the Howland family since the 1900s.

At the start of the company, it provided soap flakes to the local textile mills during the boom years of the industry. In the 1960s, Allen Howland introduced bar soap, and now the company is one of the leaders in producing organic products, which it has been doing since 2001.

While the products have changed over the years, one of the reasons for success has been the employees.

"It really is the people," said Stuart R. Benton, the president and CEO of the company. "We have people who have been here [more than] 40 years. People here learn from each other."

Benton said the company puts a lot of emphasis on the well-being of its employees, celebrating their retirements with cake and parties, and throwing company outings and barbecues.

Benton is a relative newcomer,

joining the company in 2011 as the chief financial officer, and promoted to president and CEO in 2016. Before that, he was a certified public accountant. Bradford is fun, he said.

"You can get a paycheck anywhere," he said. "You have to have fun at what you are doing."

Bradford Soap has survived two world wars, the Depression, technology and cultural changes, and still is going strong in the 21st century.

"We had two individuals who came from Bradford, England," said Benton of the company's origins. "They were trying to make it in the brave, new world."

They were James Rogers and William Murgatroyd, who came to Rhode Island and named their company after their hometown in England. Bradford was the leading textile company in England, while Rhode Island led the industry in the United States. The wool needed to be scoured, so the company's first product was flake soap to do that. From the beginning until the 1940s, Bradford produced industrial-grade soap for the textile and paper mills, then fine-quality soap in the 1960s.

This century has been a period of growth for Bradford, acquiring the Hewitt Soap Co., which had been their major bar-soap competitor; Jean Charles Mexicali, a Mexican

company that makes shower poufs; and the Stahl Soap Corp.

Bradford was ahead of the curve in developing organic products in 2001.

As part of the company's culture, Bradford Soap Works is giving back to the community. Recently, it donated products to the hurricane relief efforts in Texas and Louisiana. The company also gives out 300 turkeys each Thanksgiving to employees and to local charities.

Benton says the company and its employees take pride in helping people in need.

"It's been part of the family atmosphere," said Benton. "It is part of our culture."

The company has operated at the five-story, granite West Warwick plant since 1931. Working in a historic place isn't lost on Benton when he drives from his North Easton, Mass., home to the West Warwick plant each day.

"I have a great sense of responsibility," he said. "You come in every day thinking about that. There's a prideful feeling in what we are doing." ■

'You can get a paycheck anywhere. You have to have fun at what you are doing.'

STUART R. BENTON, Bradford Soap Works president and CEO

It really does take a team.

This recognition belongs to our more than 800 dedicated employees—and to the community organizations that partner with us! Together, we're making Rhode Island a healthier place to live and work.



It takes a team



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EXCELLENCE AT A MIDSIZE COMPANY



PROSPEROUS HISTORY: William A. "Bill" White, Coastway president and CEO, speaks with Katie MacDonald, left, marketing manager, and Jeanette Fitz, chief financial officer, at the bank's Providence office.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

COASTWAY COMMUNITY BANK

Ensuring prosperity

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer

COASTWAY COMMUNITY BANK'S team has been serving Rhode Islanders' financial needs nearly 100 years, growing to offer online and mobile banking products to more than 30,000 customers with the aim of helping them succeed.

Today, the company spans nine branches and three mortgage satellite offices staffed by 151 employees.

"From handwritten general-ledger cards in 1920 to electronic banking today, we're proud of our history," said William A. "Bill" White, Coastway's president and CEO. "We've become a leader in guiding first-time homebuyers through the buying process and in helping small-business owners grow."

As one of the smaller banks in the state, White says, Coastway possesses the ability to form relationships with its customers and

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truly work with them on a personal level to ensure they're getting what they need out of the relationship.

"I'm passionate about what we're able to do in our communities," White said. "Every time one of our mortgage loan officers gets a thank-you note from a first-time buyer, or we attend the grand opening of a new business that we've financed, that's what it's all about."

In 2014, Coastway went public with an initial public offering on the Nasdaq. Since then, the bank has been named U.S. Small Business Administration Lender of the Year for three years in a row and Rhode Island Housing's Participating Lender of the Year for four straight years.

As a vice president, business lender associate and regional sales manager, Megan Johnson is responsible for originating commercial loans by partnering with the branches and surrounding communities to develop relationships for existing clients and prospective customers.

Johnson says she's very grateful she's able to partner with her clients because the work she does not only helps them achieve their goals but may also serve to alleviate some of their financial stress.

"In my role, I am able and fortun-

nate to connect with a diverse group of individuals each and every day, which I greatly appreciate," Johnson said. "The work that I am able to do with every one of my clients has a direct impact on their business and their personal life. Every client at Coastway is valued for their relationship regardless of the size of their account. We truly appreciate getting to know all of our clients and what is important to them."

Coastway officials want their customers to fully understand how their financial decisions impact their lives. To encourage that level of financial literacy, Coastway focuses a tremendous amount of time on educating its customers, with 10 financial educators on staff who present educational curriculum in Coastway's branches, nonprofits and school groups statewide via the Empower by Coastway program.

In a continued effort to keep up with newer technologies and remain relevant and attractive to younger customers, Coastway formed an employee-run Innovation Committee in 2016 that helps tap into the ideas and opinions of the bank's employees. The committee meets monthly to discuss what the bank can do to make itself better for its customers and its own team members as well.

"To us, business excellence means looking at the person, not the numbers," White said. "We're committed to helping our customers succeed, and if that means taking a chance on a new business, or helping a customer through an account issue, we're there. On an internal level, Coastway's excellence is based on our commitment to providing our employees opportunities for growth."

Coastway promotes from within whenever possible and offers an array of enrichment opportunities for its employees, including online courses to help staff learn new skills; workshops covering topics such as health and well-being; paint nights; holiday parties; family picnics; and social events such as pub trivia nights.

"When it comes to our employees, we want them to be satisfied, engaged and heard," White said. ■

**'To us,
business
excellence
means
looking at
the person,
not the
numbers.'**

**WILLIAM A. "BILL" WHITE,
Coastway Community Bank
president and CEO**



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FISH ADVERTISING

CONSTANTLY EVOLVING: Blair Fish and Yomaris Giboyeaux, digital media specialist, review a presentation at Fish Advertising's East Greenwich office.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY



Messaging breakthrough reaps revenue growth

BY JAIME LOWE | Contributing Writer

EAST GREENWICH-BASED Fish Advertising, founded in 2009 by Blair Fish, has climbed to the top of its field.

“Fish excels because we are always in tune with the next best thing or the next best way to market to prospects. We are constantly pushing the boundaries in the marketing world to stay ahead of the technology curve,” said Blair Fish, president and founder.

One notable Fish product that successfully pushed the boundary this year was the Fish Message Drop, a service that leaves a prerecorded message directly on a consumer’s cellphone without ever calling the phone. The service, which has yielded a 10 percent call-back rate, is a growing success. It has played an integral role in Fish’s revenue growth over the past four years, with 168 percent growth (with Message Drop revenues from \$804,461 to \$2,158,065) from 2012 to 2016.

Fish, the former vice president of Mayo Advertising Group, was inspired to create Message Drop by noticing, after years of working in marketing and the advent of digital technology, the continuous need to evaluate new methods of reaching out to consumers.

“The digital age forced us to evaluate ‘new modes’ for reaching out to consumers. As people are relying less and less on traditional medias, we needed a new technology that would elicit [a] great response like the traditional medias of yesteryear. So, we set out to partner with cellphone carriers and service providers that could help us accomplish the task of getting to consumers’ cellphones while being in compliance with the law,” Fish said.

In working off the Enhanced Information Systems technology, Fish Message Drop uses the voicemail system on cellphones to drop a prerecorded message directly to voicemail, not through the direct-dial cellphone front end. The service is employed in automotive, banking, college athletics and higher education, to name a few.

The biggest challenge Fish met was in dealing with the success of the service, which yields a 10 percent call-back rate.

“When Fish Message Drop was first launched, its release became an ‘aha moment’ for Fish’s management. With a 10 percent call-back rate and an appointment rate typically between 5-10 percent, Fish knew it had a winner,” Fish said. “The biggest problem we faced with Message Drop is getting clients to understand that 10 percent of people will call back on average. So, that’s a lot of calls coming in at the same time.”

Because of its overwhelming number of call backs, Fish built its own call center.

The call center specialists take the incoming calls and research the client and the promotion at hand. The team can service up to 9,000 message drops per day (translating to 900 calls).

“From a return-on-investment standpoint, there is not another

media that Fish knows about that works better. Nine thousand message drops is 900 call backs and up to 90 appointments made for clients. When the math is calculated, it is evident why Fish Message Drop is taking the advertising world by storm!” Fish said.

The company is close-knit at nine employees. Many of them have been working at Fish Advertising for more than seven years. Fish attributes this retention to a generous IRA plan and full health benefits, which in turn adds to its success.

Looking toward the future, Fish looks to the advent of new product Fish Fusion, an integrated way to target customers using social media, internet protocol targeting, Fish Message Drop, email and direct mail all combined into one synergistic marketing campaign.

“If a client knows their prospects’ basic information, we can work wonders! Wherever that person goes, so too will targeted advertising,” Fish said. ■

‘We are constantly pushing the boundaries in the marketing world to stay ahead of the technology curve.’

BLAIR FISH, Fish Advertising founder and president



ST. MARY'S HOME FOR CHILDREN

QUALITY TIME: Jana Gasbarro, middle school teacher, works with students in a special education class at St. Mary's Home for Children.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

A haven for children challenged by trauma

BY WENDY PIERMAN MITZEL | Contributing Writer

ALTHOUGH NO LONGER AN ORPHANAGE, St. Mary's Home for Children continues to operate as a safe place for children who have experienced multiple forms of trauma and may have nowhere else to turn.

St. Mary's provides a variety of comprehensive treatment programs for nearly 500 children and families with behavioral issues, psychiatric problems and other needs resulting from issues that include abuse and neglect.

"Our mission is to create an environment of healing and hope for those we serve," said Susan DeRita, development officer. "Children and families are empowered to develop healthy, trusting relationships ... that enable them to lead fulfilling lives."

"I believe that the continuum of care that we provide contributes to our success," explained Executive Director Carlene McCann. "From the highest-end residential treatment program to office-based therapy and everything in between, we are able to serve our youth and families at almost any level of care that they may need. ... We are also able to identify service gaps and create programs and services to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families in Rhode Island."

With residential programs, a special education school, outpatient programs and a myriad of other support services, a large part of the St. Mary's goal is to reunite children with their families.

For instance, during a recent case, residential treatment counselors were able to locate the older sister of an adolescent client with violent outbursts. The team worked to create a "forever" home for the pair, which led to a decrease in the girl's aggressive behaviors and more success at school and within the program.

"Our team has continued to support the family and the family is functioning very well," said McCann. "The youth is attending school regularly, maintains a part-time job and is seeing the many possibilities that her future holds."

By using data and industry best practices, St. Mary's provides continuous support, even after initial treatment. Staff recently partnered with the national Building Bridges Initiative, which supports partnerships between residential and community-based programs, families, youth, policymakers and natural supports. It is family-driven, youth-guided, strength-based, culturally and linguistically competent and consistent with the research on sustained positive outcomes.

"This involves taking our services into the family's home and community during the residential intervention and providing aftercare services post-discharge ... significantly reducing length of stay and ensuring permanency," explained McCann.

St. Mary's understands the potential for childhood trauma comes from a number of places, and the agency has recently developed the only community-based program of its kind in Rhode Island to address the exploitation of youth through human trafficking.

According to McCann, St. Mary's is also tackling the challenges facing adoptive and foster families.

"Having worked with many children who have been removed from pre-adoptive, adoptive and foster families due to sexual acting-out behaviors (due to past sexual victimization), we created a program to support families and youth in the home so that the child does not end up in group care," said McCann.

St. Mary's is an accredited organization that provides education assistance for staff, specialized training and a Leadership Academy for advancement opportunity. It operates at an administrative cost rate of 7.1 percent. For 2017, income increased minimally to \$8.3 million but did not quite meet expenses at \$8.4 million.

Referrals to St. Mary's come from the state Department of Children, Youth and Families, third-party insurers, parents, physicians and school districts throughout Rhode Island, as well as the Episcopal Diocese.

"We have a generous donor base and some very strong relationships with foundations who help fund some aspects of programming that the state and/or third parties don't fund," said McCann.

Still, she added, it's difficult to make ends meet.

"When you run a facility that operates 24/7 with no guarantees about census from funding sources, budgeting is a challenge," she said. ■

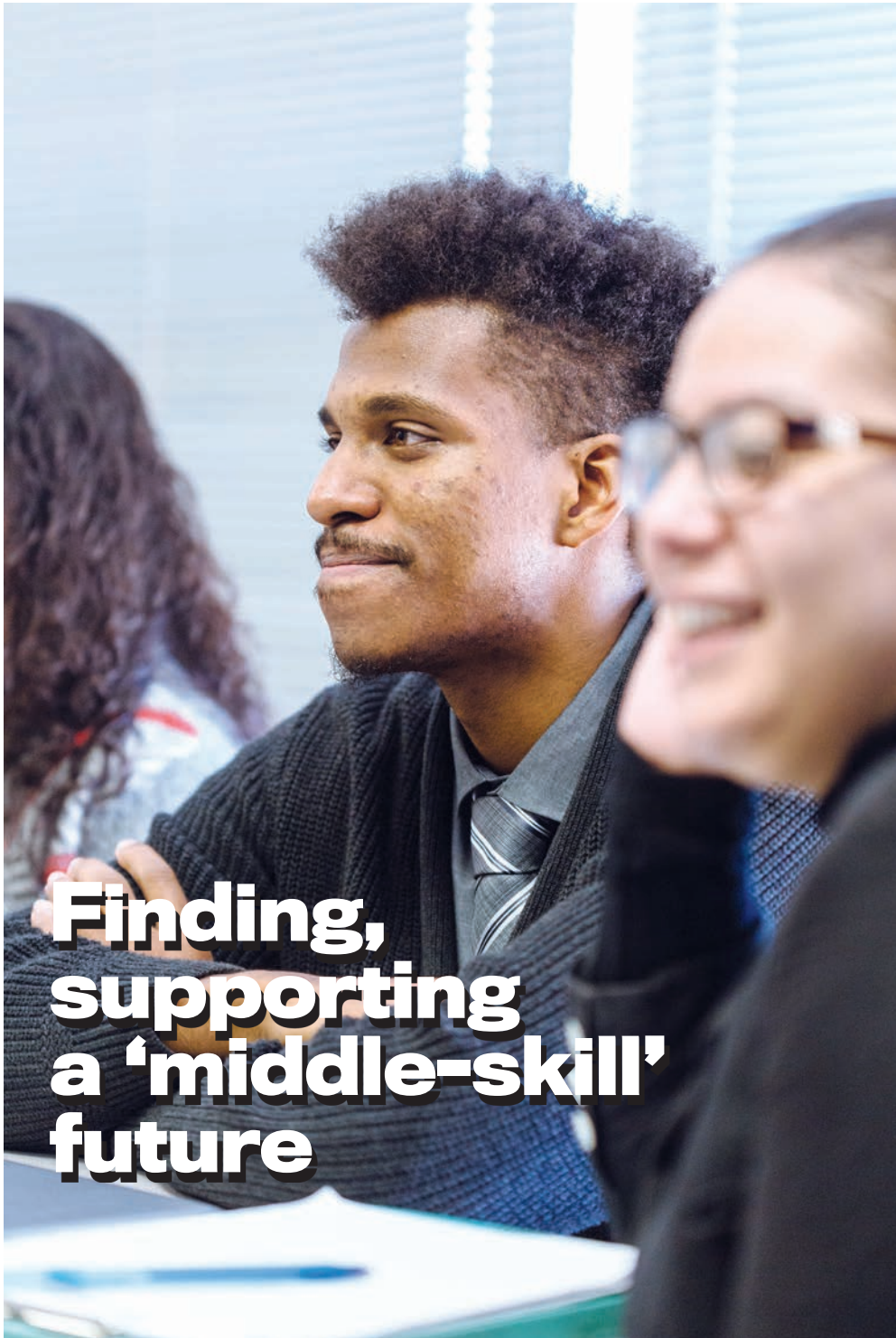
'Children and families are **empowered to develop healthy, trusting relationships.**'

CARLENE MCCANN, St. Mary's Home for Children executive director

YEAR UP PROVIDENCE

A NEW PATH: Sahel Lopez-Best, center, and Pamela Rodriguez, right, are students in the Year Up Providence business-writing class. Year Up provides young adults from across Rhode Island a path to a career by putting them to work for a year – six months in the classroom learning workplace skills and six months interning in a chosen field.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY



Finding, supporting a 'middle-skill' future

BY KATE TALERICO | Contributing Writer

ON A WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, Year Up Providence's offices are buzzing. Students – mostly minority from families with low incomes – fill out job applications at tables or practice Power-Point presentations. Others work in teams on soft skills over bagels and coffee.

Before this year, many of them had never set foot in a corporate workplace. That changed when they applied for Year Up, which takes motivated young adults with low incomes from across Rhode Island and puts them to work for a year – six months in the classroom learning workplace skills and another six months interning in fields such as health care, information technology and human resource management.

"They're smart, graduated from high school and just looking for an opportunity not to be the working poor for the rest of their lives," said Cathy Doyle, executive director of Year Up Providence.

"Year Up students have proven to be a tremendous pipeline of young, tal-

ented individuals who have this passion to grow, develop and learn, and really be part of something bigger than themselves," said Dolph Johnson, executive vice president and chief human resources officer for Hasbro Inc.

Middle-skill jobs, that is jobs that require education beyond high school but not a four-year college degree, make up more than half of the state's employment opportunities. But only 41 percent of Rhode Island's workforce is trained at that level, according to the National Skills Coalition. In Rhode Island, Year Up is working to fill in that gap by supplying people with the skills that the market needs. Graduates go on to work as customer-service representatives,

'They are ... just looking for an opportunity not to be the working poor for the rest of their lives.'

CATHY DOYLE,
 Year Up Providence executive director

call-center analysts, network technicians and administrative assistants.

Just this year, Year Up Providence graduated its largest class in history at 129 students. Doyle said that Year Up relies upon its corporate partners – such as Fidelity Investments, Hasbro and Lifespan Inc. – for its continued success and relevance.

"We don't want to train talent based on what we think the market needs. We want to train talent based on what the market actually does need," Doyle said.

For instance, two years ago, the nonprofit piloted a program that trained 15 interns in sales and marketing roles at Hasbro, and then matched them with an internship there over the course of a year.

Hasbro ended up bringing over half of those interns on as full-time employees. "They were individuals we did not want to lose," Johnson said.

The Hasbro pilot has allowed Year Up to think about how it might continue to grow partnerships and training across the country, Doyle said.

Companies don't often pass up the chance to host more Year Up trainees – the nonprofit renews 95 percent of its corporate internship seats, Doyle said.

"The 95 percent is a testament to the relationships that we built with our partners and the partners' assessment of the talent we're delivering," Doyle said.

The numbers matter. "We're a very metric-driven organization," said Doyle. And the metrics they see at Year Up are reason to celebrate.

More than 98 percent of January 2016 graduates achieved full-time employment or full-time college enrollment within four months of graduation, well ahead of the goal of 85 percent. And the team regularly exceeds its goal of a \$16 per hour average starting wage for employed graduates.

Results like that speak to the high expectations the program puts on students.

"There was a point that I wanted to drop out," said Isamar Reyes, a single mother who graduated from Year Up in July 2017. "My coach locked me in a room, and said, 'You're not going to drop out, you have the potential.'"

Reyes, who came into Year Up making \$9.50 an hour and working two jobs, recently received an offer from Bank of America Corp. for a job that will pay her more than \$20 an hour.

"I now have a great job, and I wouldn't have gotten that job if it wasn't for Year Up," she said. ■



ACE comeback due to school playing to strengths

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

THE ACADEMY FOR CAREER EXPLORATION is a school rags-to-riches story.

ACE Head of School Mario Cirillo said that Rhode Island's first charter school, founded in 1994, had a bleak outlook when he came on board five years ago, after nearly five decades in various education roles. ACE, the former Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy, had deteriorated so badly that it was on the brink of closure.

"By the time I got there, they were not much of a player. The budget was not good. Academically, test scores were down the tubes," he said of the Providence high school.

This all came at a time when charter schools were under intense scrutiny, said Cirillo.

Enrollment, with a capacity of 225 students, was down to about 170. Financial backers were retreating. There was no rigor in the classrooms. Test scores were low, and there was a revenue deficit with little accountability or return on investment. Teachers were sending students out for sandwiches during the school day, he said.

What followed was a complete paradigm shift in terms of culture, mission and structure.

It has moved from a school approaching the goal of developing talent for the labor market based on old constructs of the economy with a curriculum to match – to three state-approved pathways: Cisco networking and cybersecurity; application programming and software development; and data science, said Cirillo. All are high-skill, high-wage and high-demand fields. This planning was guided by business connections ACE had with Tech Collective, Bridge Technical Talent and Atrion, a Carousel Co., as well as the University of Rhode Island, Community College of Rhode Island and Roger Williams University.

The educational system at ACE underwent a radical overhaul as well.

ACE is the only school in the state to be strength-driven, using the Gallup educational model. Students and faculty learn their top individual strengths with a model "maximizing outcomes by leveraging what's strong, not wrong," according to Gallup.com, and use it to their unique educational advantage.

"Every adult in this building – including the custodian – has mapped that all out, and it's made a big difference in the way we operate as a team. ... Kids know what their strengths are and how they apply it

in class," said Cirillo. Every classroom, he said, has its teacher's top five strengths posted.

The school's strengths, meanwhile, are being noticed. The R.I. Department of Education renewed ACE's charter for five years, naming it one of the state's Amazing Schools for 2016-2017.

With 22 team members ready to take on the innovative challenges ahead – Cirillo says the changes will help teachers advance their resumes and ultimately, careers. Less of a "sage-on-a-stage" now, teachers are using a cognitive apprenticeship approach at ACE. "It's where if you want to be a stone mason, you work with a stone mason," said Cirillo. "He releases the task to you when you both feel you're ready."

Bloom's Taxonomy, an educational model of "create, evaluate, analyze, apply, understand and remember," is also in the mix at ACE.

"We've worked diligently to release teachers from that [traditional] role and be facilitators of learning. Kids don't just sit there and absorb knowledge. They have to understand who they are, what their strengths are and how they engage in intellectual learning."

For 2017, 100 percent of ACE graduates made post-secondary school connections, said Cirillo: 98 percent to college, 1 percent to the military and 1 percent to full-time employment. Enrollment's up to 204. The school has a healthy budget and a contingency fund of \$1.9 million. Cost efficiencies were introduced to further reduce administrative expenses; last year enough money was saved to buy Chromebooks for all students.

Coming up at ACE: A potential dual academy, at which students can earn a college associate degree in high school; a senior-year "experientialship," where they solve problems with real-world members of industry; a middle school program; and, eventually, a new building. ■

ACADEMY FOR CAREER EXPLORATION

NO SAGE-ON-A-STAGE: Academy for Career Exploration teacher Denise Burke, center, helps Jamie Pagan with a lesson. The school has overhauled its curriculum and approach, and turned itself around as a result.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

'We've worked diligently to release teachers from that [traditional] role and be facilitators of learning.'

MARIO CIRILLO, Academy for Career Exploration head of school



Diverse perspectives guiding health care

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

PROVIDING EXTENSIVE DIVERSITY EFFORTS AT Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island is good customer service and good business, said Peter Marino, the nonprofit's president and CEO, especially for the health care patient groups it serves – at-risk populations.

“Health care is personal,” he said. “When you or I are trying to deal with a health care issue, it gets down to decisions at very critical points. What better way to see that perspective than to provide a wide range of folks with similar backgrounds?”

And while there are business benefits to a diverse workforce made up of different abilities, cultures and communities as they relate to customer service, the varying perspectives and mutual respect that employee mix creates also make for a rewarding place to work. The focus on diversity begins with Neighborhood's onboarding process and continues through every stage of an employee's time at the company.

If there is a classic event at Neighborhood for its 500 employees, it is Diversity Week, said Marino. “People get very excited. There are folks wearing traditional clothing of their culture, they get to see what the other people are all about and make stronger connections,” he said, such as an employee of German ancestry wearing lederhosen, for example. Potluck meals during this week also reflect the varying international influences at the office. “It's one of my favorites, and a downfall,” said Marino, with abundant food from different cultures.

While favorites such as Diversity Week are a fixture, diversity initiatives at Neighborhood are constantly reviewed and expanded as needed. A member of the LGBT community came to speak on transgender people in the workplace this year, for example, to keep relevant issues at the forefront. It's also important that the right information is getting to the right people.

A newer part of the diversity training for upper-level employees, said Marino, is the Managing Our Neighborhood effort.

“When I arrived here, we were growing so quickly,” he said, with more cohesion needed among leadership. So the Managing Our Neighborhood Group was created. Cohorts of 20 to 25 managers now work with the University of Rhode Island management program, he said, where they are taught how to be better managers and work through problems

together. Race and diversity issues are a focus, as they are with other trainings throughout the year.

Neighborhood makes a particular effort to attract applicants who are veterans or who have disabilities, collaborating with groups such as Rhode Island Hire Our Heroes, HireVeterans.com, the R.I. Office of Rehabilitation Services and the Disability Employment Initiative, to name a few.

Creating a diverse work environment, offering up-to-date training and awareness efforts, and adding to the comprehensive diversity platform as needed are major parts of the Neighborhood formula for success. But so are its engaged, empowered team members.

Lauriza Monegro-Ramirez is a Neighborhood community care coordinator who serves on the company's diversity committee and new diversity council. She joined the committee in 2015 and has helped in planning events and activities. Diversity is something achieved by reaching out, she said.

“The biggest thing [I've noticed] is the interest staff have in learning about each other,” she said. “You don't necessarily interact with others as part of your day. There are two different floors and sides of the building ... There is enthusiasm to learn about different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. It's all based on ‘How can we bring people together?’ ” Answering that question involves planning diversity events so they are all-inclusive, accessible to employees who have breaks in the morning or afternoon, she said.

And with employee ideas, feedback and participation, Neighborhood's diverse culture is further energized, Ramirez said.

“We want to be sure we are capturing what staff members represent. We want people to be more aware of different things that make up a culture. This planning causes unity.” ■

NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH PLAN OF RHODE ISLAND

DIVERSE OPPORTUNITY:
 At center, Lauriza Monegro-Ramirez, community care coordinator at Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, meets with the group at the company's Smithfield office. To her right is Shalini Singh, manager of financial data and analysis. In the foreground, at left, is Nihdi Patel, senior health care data analyst.
 PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELY

‘What better way to see [another] perspective than to provide a wide range of folks with similar backgrounds?’

PETER MARINO,
 Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island CEO and president

JOHN D. JARRELL

GUIDING RIGHT: From left, John D. Jarrell, founder of BioSci Labs in Coventry; Michael Stone, lab director; Jim Wilkinson, partner at Marcum, corporate sponsor of BioSci, calibrate a new piece of equipment for the lab.

PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO



Entrepreneurship guide charts scientific success

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

“I DON’T KNOW WHEN HE SLEEPS,” said Dr. Christopher Born, director of orthopedic trauma at Rhode Island Hospital, of John D. Jarrell.

Born says the dynamic Jarrell – the owner and director of **BioSci Labs** in Coventry, an incubator for science, technology and engineering startups – has all the qualities of someone perfectly geared toward helping other entrepreneurs.

“He is very good at looking at a project and quickly deciding what the chances are for failure and success ... making a decision based on his science background, his past business experiences and his ability to read the personalities of those involved.”

And Born should know.

Jarrell was instrumental in guiding him through the research-grant process, budgeting and fine-tuning one of his projects a decade ago. Born says he could not have completed the work – a grant to look at the efficacy of a silver-based chemistry in an animal model of open (compound) fractures – without him. Now, other innovators can get the same benefits of working with Jarrell and his team.

Like most successful entrepreneurs, Jarrell saw a need and went about fill-

ing that need. He opened BioSci Labs in a former GTECH building earlier this year. He also owns Materials Science Associates LLC, a biomedical, engineering and science consultancy, which is also located in the Coventry facility. The latter has plenty of room for co-working space, cubicles, conference rooms, a cafeteria and wet labs for companies looking to commercialize products or techniques.

The wet labs are the region’s big missing piece for this kind of development, Jarrell says. There aren’t any in the area for innovators and inventors, besides the four at his new facility. They offer the appropriate ventilation, equipment and plumbing to allow for research with liquid chemicals and other materials.

Jarrell, who did not receive state

‘It’s easiest for [entrepreneurs] to focus on what they know, their technology.’

JOHN D. JARRELL, BioSci Labs founder and owner

funding for BioSci Labs, also realized the need for a venture like his when he explored financing options. But with the determination of a successful entrepreneur, he didn’t let the lack of state incentives detract him from his goal. “They are not interested in companies like ours,” he said. “The state has determined other ways to push economic growth, and I don’t fault them for that. There is an appearance that there are programs available that don’t exist. I even hired a lobbyist. There were no programs for companies like ours in the state.”

Jarrell advises startups to look for other funding resources – as he did – such as private investors. He sees a need for funding avenues for innovators that don’t involve government, universities or hospitals. BioSci Labs is a hub for that information and more. Entrepreneurs know that they can come to the Coventry incubator for business advice, feasibility studies from a business perspective and product development. Not having a hub where there is all that expertise under one roof, he says, adds to the struggle for up-and-coming firms. He wants to give them focus.

“Entrepreneurs are spending so much time with ... insurance, accounting, tax attorneys, legal advice – when really, it’s easiest for them to focus on what they know, their technology. We do it all and want to be that kind of place,” where entrepreneurs can get details ironed out in a more convenient fashion by experts who have already been through the process of getting a product through commercialization.

BioSci Labs has goals. Jarrell would like to bring a large manufacturer into the building, so a startup could go straight through to the manufacturing process all in one place. He is getting inquiries on specialized space in the area of medical technology.

A cohesive, organized product-development process will help lure investors to fledgling companies, said Jarrell. “Provide them with that early and we can present better deals to investors and to groups hopefully acquiring these startups.” ■

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