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NOURISHING LESSONS: Mim L. Runey, right, Johnson & Wales University chief operating officer, hosts her cabinet meeting, which includes, from left, Diane D'Ambra, vice president of human resources, and Marie Bernando-Sousa, senior vice president of administration and enrollment management.

PBN PHOTO/
RUPERT WHITELEY

Runey nurtures JWU's core and growth

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

MIM L. RUNEY HAS WORKED for Johnson & Wales University – at some location, in some role – for 28 years.

That fact alone should speak volumes about the intensity and ongoing challenges in higher education as a form of constant engagement and opportunity. And it's the only place she's ever worked, which should say something about her job satisfaction.

Progress in meeting students' needs during her tenure shows that Runey is a strategist and change-maker. Student retention, graduation rates, assets and bond ratings all have increased on her watch.

A South Carolina native, Runey, president of Johnson & Wales in Providence and chief operating officer of its four-campus system, graduated from Clemson University and earned a master's degree in management from Webster University in Charleston, S.C. She got a doctorate in law and policy from Northeastern University in Boston, three years after packing up her family and heading north.

"I moved to Providence in 2006," said Runey. "My kids were 12, 9 and 3, and I had two cats and a dog."

Before that move, however, Runey had to make a bold leadership decision. She elected to close JWU's Charleston, S.C., and Norfolk, Va., campuses and start one in Charlotte, N.C. The closures became official in 2006.

"It was bittersweet, but an opportunity to build from the ground up, start again and have a permanent home," said Runey, "along with room for more growth and facilities that would continue to support our programming," as opposed to leasing an old tobacco factory in downtown Charleston's historic district.

Charlotte gave the university \$40 million to make that city its new home, said Runey.

'Our strategic plan focuses on food and [how] food touches the world in different ways.'

MIM L. RUNEY, Johnson & Wales University chief operating officer, Providence campus president

The new campus was a success in terms of enrollment, she said. Today the university has more than 14,000 students, with about 8,500 in Providence. It also has campuses in Denver and North Miami, Fla.

Johnson & Wales has an early legacy of internship, work-experience programming and an international presence. Both have grown during Runey's time at the helm. About 10 percent of the university's students are from more than 63 other countries. Its alumni are pursuing careers in 124 countries.

Though the school offers degrees in arts and sciences, engineering, education, business, health and wellness, and more, it's been known for its culinary program – and is working to broaden its image as a world-class university with excellence in many fields.

Runey hopes to build on that foundation and show how food is connected to so many other industries.

"Our strategic plan focuses on food and [how] food touches the world in different ways ... the economy, health and wellness," Runey said. "It intersects with medicine, policy issues and hunger. There are opportunities to expand where food is and how it influences people. ... Food can impact certain health challenges, can influence athletes, the brain."

Market demand also guides the university's programming.

The institution's physician assistant program is one such area where Johnson & Wales is making its mark. In 2014 the university was the first in Rhode Island to offer the accredited, two-year program, said Runey. At first, it got a quizzical reaction.

"We'd get the raised eyebrows, like, 'Why are you dipping your toe here?' But college health and wellness and culinary arts have a natural synergy," she said.

With more than 1,000 applicants, Johnson & Wales can only take 36 PA students each year. All have passed their PA exams on the first attempt, and of the first cohort, 11 went on to work in Rhode Island.

She may have been with the same employer for nearly three decades, but strategically, Runey has never stayed in one place with Johnson & Wales operations.

"Fields are very rapidly changing," she said. "The real key is to predict what is coming." ■

CAREER ACHIEVER

Data drives better care

Mark Stewart's work exemplifies our mission to make healthcare affordable and simple. A champion of innovation, he has changed the way we support provider networks, with data and analytics driving more thoughtful decisions that can lead to improved outcomes for members.

He also led the launch of **Blue Insights** analytics, allowing employer groups to make better informed decisions.

Congratulations to Mark, Chief Financial Officer honoree, and all the other C-Suite Award winners!

Mark Stewart
Chief Financial Officer



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Navigant keeps its community focus

BY JAIME LOWE | Contributing Writer

OBSTACLE JUMPER: Lisa Dandeneau, chief operating officer of Navigant Credit Union, meets with Eliza Lavergne, vice president, project management, at the credit union's Smithfield office. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

“IT’S NOT JUST WORK. It’s very much a work-life balance,” said Lisa Dandeneau, of her job as chief operating officer of **Navigant Credit Union**, headquartered in Smithfield.

Dandeneau has been at the company for 24 years, nine of those in her current position. Born and raised in Pawtucket, Dandeneau always knew she wanted to pursue finance – she studied accounting at Bryant University. But it was only after working four years as a public accountant that she moved to the credit union business.

In 1994, she took a job as assistant vice president/internal auditor at Navigant, then located in Central Falls. At the time, Navigant had one branch and controlled \$304 million in assets.

As the internal auditor, Dandeneau managed the department and developed the first internal audit function for the credit union. After two years in the position, she was promoted to vice president of electronic banking and technology. She spent four years evaluating, choosing and implementing a new data-processing system for the credit union, as well as navigating the daily operations and development of its pilot online banking and electronic bill-payment services.

After spending four years in that job, Dandeneau was promoted to senior vice president/chief operating officer in 2003. In the position, she oversaw operations at six branches across the state, and developed a long-term retail branching strategy that has been instrumental to the company tripling in size in the past dozen years.

“We trusted Lisa to take on any project and navigate the credit union through any obstacles that came up along the way,” said Navigant Credit Union President and CEO Gary E. Furtado. “Her leadership has been invaluable since the day we hired her, and her work ethic

‘Her leadership has been invaluable since the day we hired her.’

GARY E. FURTADO, Navigant Credit Union president and CEO

and commitment to our members [have] been infectious throughout the organization.”

In 2009, Dandeneau was promoted to her current position, executive vice president/chief operating officer. Now, the credit union has 18 branches across the state and more than \$1.9 billion in assets. It is the second-largest credit union in Rhode Island, and Dandeneau has been integral to this success.

One of the challenges in Dandeneau’s work has been not only finding the balance between

work and family but also navigating the amount of growth the organization has experienced.

“Knowing how to maintain the culture with our growth has been a positive challenge for us. ... This institution was founded in 1915, and we never lost sight of who we are with all the growth. ... Embedded in all of it are the people,” she said.

Navigant’s core values – LUCI, which stands for leadership, unity, caring, integrity – have resonated; “caring” being one that Dandeneau touches upon often. She cares about the employees and the community and giving back.

“This is a great organization, and our employees are passionate about what they do. ... My favorite accomplishment is to be able to honor and align our values with our goals, and our employees really resonate with that. We take care of our employees, members and the community, and that’s the key to success and always will be.”

She serves as the board chair for the Pawtucket Corps. of the Salvation Army, giving back directly to the community she grew up in. She works with the Little Sisters of the Poor, where she served as co-chair. She works with the Rotary Club of Smithfield (where she has served as president and treasurer), and she is a member of the Bryant University Women’s Summit Program Committee.

“Being able to align personally and professionally is so rewarding,” she said.

This sentiment extends to Dandeneau’s work.

“At Navigant, we get to make a difference. We’re not a giant organization, but we get to make a difference with communities, and their people and families get to see it,” she said. ■

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



**CONGRATULATIONS PRESIDENT MIM RUNEY
FOR EARNING THE
PROVIDENCE BUSINESS NEWS C-SUITE
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*Since 1914, Johnson & Wales University has looked to the future
to prepare students for the careers of tomorrow. We are proud that you are
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that inspires professional success and lifelong personal
and intellectual growth.*



JOHNSON & WALES
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Strong CFO embraces tech solutions

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer



QUANTIFIED: Mark Stewart, right, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island's chief financial officer, during a meeting at the company's Exchange Street office with Catherine Mitchell, managing director, actuarial, and Sean Neylon, manager, actuarial. PBN PHOTO/MIKE SALERNO

TWO OF THE THINGS Mark Stewart, chief financial officer at **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island**, is passionate about: technology, especially for data purposes; and volunteerism, especially for Crossroads Rhode Island. And both play a major role in his performance at the state's largest health insurer.

He has been at Blue Cross for three years and has served as its chief financial officer for two.

Before coming onboard, Stewart gained a wide perspective on business and finances with positions at New Century Health, Aetna Inc., Cigna, UBS Warburg Financial Services, General Electric Investment Corp., and ConAgra Corp. In addition to soaking up on-the-job knowledge, he completed financial-management programs offered by GE and Cigna.

Data has always fascinated Stewart, even in his role at packaged-foods company ConAgra years ago.

"Our job was to sell products to grocery stores. We'd try to get analytics even back then. Say if [a product] had permanent space on a shelf. If we set up a display instead, how much does it affect sales?"

Plentiful health care analytics are even more interesting to Stewart. Cohorts of data allow insurers to see different trends in the market. But he notes that an explosion of technology poses its own challenges, with a vast amount of information available. The important thing, he said, is figuring out how businesses such as health insurers can use it for their benefit and that of their members.

"How do we cull it down to actually give us insight ... to benefit our patients? How do we address issues before they reach a catastrophic level? How do we influence behavior?"

Advanced software that more efficiently

'Mark helped the company to right-size [2016 losses and return] to profitability in 2017.'

KIM KECK, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island president and CEO

serves companies that offer Blue Cross benefits is one improvement Stewart has championed.

Before, he said, human resources directors or small-business owners would reach out to Blue Cross to review what they were spending on health care.

But what they would get, he said, was access to a website portal, with static costs produced and no real actionable items.

"We needed to put it in more bite-sized pieces, offer data that is not a bunch of jargon that they can't understand but easy concepts. And hopefully, simplify this," he said.

Now, the tools to check costs are more front-facing for members, he said. The software allows them to "drill down or sideways and come back up" with cost information they require.

Stewart also has put analytic support in place for these businesses, consultants who work to show companies what's driving their costs and what some solutions may be – such as wellness programs or a change in the way their benefits are designed. He plans more hires in this arena, more growth.

"An HR person doesn't need to feel like they are on an island alone to determine cost drivers" anymore, he said.

"In his first year as CFO, Mark helped the company to right-size the financial losses of \$35 million experienced in 2016, returning to profitability in 2017," said Kim Keck, Blue Cross president and CEO. "In the past, it was much more about contracting and fighting over rates. Now it's a very collaborative approach. We look at the analytics and work with our networks to provide better, more-efficient and – in the end – better-value care."

One such collaboration is with Brown University, which will pair interns with analytics work experience at Blue Cross, and partner with faculty experts for ideas and advice, said Stewart.

Also benefiting from Stewart's resourcefulness and knowledge: Crossroads Rhode Island, his regular pick as a preferred project site for Blue Cross' annual day of service.

A member of its finance and audit committee, Stewart last year joined the board of directors for the nonprofit, which works to end homelessness.

"They are different than other organizations that try to attack homelessness but don't focus on ending it," said Stewart – similar to the big-perspective mindset he's brought to Blue Cross. ■

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



LISA DANDENEAU
Providence Business News 2018 C-Suite
EVP/Chief Operating Officer of the Year

Champion of the community,
tireless advocate for our members,
and a daily **inspiration** to us all.

Congratulations, Lisa, from your
entire team at Navigant Credit Union.



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HR discipline guiding growth

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

CHANGE AGENT: Chief Human Resources Officer Tammy Lederer has seen Brown Medicine through a lot of growth.
PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

TAMMY LEDERER, Brown Medicine's chief human resources officer, has had her hands full for more than a decade converting paper medical records to digital, a new name, new branding and a switch to a patient-centered medical home model of care.

The name change has been the latest transition. Just this past February, University Medicine changed its name to Brown Medicine.

Its parent company, Brown Physicians Inc., is a partner of Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School. Showing this affiliation in a more obvious way helps attract doctors who want to expand their scope, said Lederer.

"Physicians ... come and work for us because they want to teach and have an academic component" to their careers, she said. "That opportunity is there for them. And research."

When she first came onboard to what was then University Medicine Foundation in 2004, the nonprofit had fewer than 200 employees. "I knew everybody. I could introduce everybody to the president," she said. "I can't do that now." The number of employees has more than doubled, and interviewing and hiring duties are shared among a larger HR staff to accommodate the organization's more comprehensive mission.

Lederer is a University of Rhode Island graduate who previously worked in human resources for Lifespan Corp. About two of the three decades she's spent in health care have been in the HR arena. She is the former director of the state Society for Human Resource Management, and a member of many other industry associations.

One of her responsibilities at Brown Medicine has been to maximize the effectiveness of its employees and their workplace satisfaction. "I try and improve things all the time," so that team members remain engaged and motivated,

'Salaries needed to go up to be more competitive in the market.'

TAMMY LEDERER, Brown Medicine chief human resources officer

said Lederer.

When she started, turnover and pay had to be addressed. "Compensation was one of the first things I looked at and talked to the board about. ... Salaries needed to go up to be more competitive in the market. To get that implemented took years. [One has] to bring the business argument forward with HR issues to get everyone onboard and embrace it."

Staff surveys helped guide other potential improvements, such as adding Community College of Rhode Island prerequisite classes at Brown Medicine's East Providence campus, so that employees can take classes on-site and not have to travel. Brown Medicine leader-

ship backed the move, and other professional-development initiatives, such as offering tuition reimbursement for employees who take licensed practical nursing courses at CCRI, said Lederer: \$2,000 per year for every year they are employed, until the tuition bill is paid in full.

These and other HR efforts are working. Brown Medicine was named one of the Best Places To Work in Rhode Island in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and in 2014 by Providence Business News, and named 2017 Business of the Year by the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce.

Probably the largest transition at Brown Medicine is the change to the way it delivers care, a collaborative approach with all facets working together.

With more than 200 primary care, specialty outpatient and subspecialty physicians onboard, the new patient-centered medical home model of care was implemented in 2016. The new model puts all of a patient's caregivers – primary and specialty – under one roof for more streamlined collaboration.

"We have one medical record for each patient across the organization, so if someone sees a primary care doctor at Brown Medicine and one of our specialists, the patient's information is in one record," she said.

With Brown Medicine's recent changes accomplished, Lederer looks ahead to what may be in the future in an ever-changing industry. Changes and impact of the Affordable Care Act are something she and others in health care and human resources are watching closely, she said.

"In all the years I've worked in health care, it keeps evolving – which is what I love about it. Nothing is stagnant and there's always something new to learn," she said. ■

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, NONPROFIT/SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY

Lifespan congratulates

Lisa Abbott and Barbara Riley, DNP, RN, NEA-BC

On receiving the Providence Business News *2018 C-Suite Award*



Lisa Abbott

Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Community Affairs

Chief Human Resources Officer, Enterprise Private Company

Lisa Abbott has excelled in taking a holistic approach to investing in our employees and keeping our mission of delivering exceptional patient care at the core of every decision. Through her transformative leadership, she has created a world class human resources organization committed to fostering an exceptional employee experience and focused on delivering superior customer service. We thank Lisa for her unrelenting dedication to our employees, our patients and the many communities we serve across the region.



Barbara Riley, DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Senior Vice President for Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer

Chief Nursing Officer

Since 2002, Barbara has been a critical member of executive management for Rhode Island Hospital and its Hasbro Children's Hospital, collaborating on and often leading key strategic, medical staff, planning, and governance initiatives. She has established a consistent standard of nursing practice and quality of care across the organization that has repeatedly garnered national recognition for nursing excellence. We thank Barbara for her innovative thinking, compassion for patients, exemplary leadership and mentorship, and dedication to the art and science of nursing - all of which are unparalleled in the industry.



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TEAMING UP: Rachelle Handfield, executive vice president of human resources at Collette, has redesigned the company's approach to compensation and professional development.
PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

Tuning Collette team for better performance

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

RACHELLE HANDFIELD, executive vice president of human resources at Pawtucket-based **Collette Travel Service Inc.**, has developed her department into a team-building enterprise synced to the company's mission. But you would be hard-pressed to put a label on her work.

"I've been in the industry for 27 years and I don't even think my husband could tell you what I do," said Handfield.

Human resources is only part of it.

"I don't just think about HR. I think about strategies, opportunities, risk. ... I have to know enough about what's happening in the business environment. I do that as much as I pay attention to what's happening in the HR space," she said.

Her nearly four years at Collette have been a time of great change for the company, as well as for Handfield herself. Her industry switch from banking to guided travel has offered her and Collette a more wide-open perspective in remaining relevant, competitive and forward-thinking.

She's instituted changes in how Collette handles professional development, compensation, communication and accountability, for example. Though company organizational needs are different between banking and travel, Handfield noted that some things are not so different.

"[In both cases], we need to understand ... our customer and how we make money. We need to understand strategy, understand the needs of the organization and build a business strategy through people," she said.

"We are a tour operator, a tour guide, and act as stewards going with you to a foreign land. ... What we want for our customers is the same thing as we do in banking: for you to know that you are safe doing business with us."

'She's challenged all of us to think and behave differently.'

ELIZABETH SIMMONS,
Collette senior vice president
of global sales

Elizabeth Simmons, senior vice president of global sales at Collette, is a fan of Handfield's work. "She's challenged all of us to think and behave differently," Simmons said.

Collette is a family business that began 100 years ago, around the time the Boston Red Sox won its first World Series. The bulk of its 650-or-so global employees are based in Pawtucket. But it also has offices in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

CEO Dan Sullivan Jr. recognized something was missing in the team, said Handfield, and looked for a senior HR person. "I give him tremendous credit. He realized that we could elevate the HR leader role," she said. In the

former, more-siloed system, for example, training was separate from the HR function. Before Handfield came onboard, the HR leader reported to the chief financial officer.

Now, as an equal member of the company's Strategic Leadership Team, dramatic changes have happened in the time Handfield has been at Collette.

But she is quick to point out that changes, such as revamping the compensation process and adding professional-development opportunities, didn't happen all at once.

In fact, Handfield suspects some team members may not have thought she was doing much at all in her first six months or so on the job. She took her time learning about the company, observing its processes, asking questions and building relationships. But by the time changes in compensation, professional development, HR team alignment and other improvements were implemented, she said, those items did not come across as brand-new.

"I started talking about it two years before I brought a compensation person on," said Handfield. She believes in leaders changing the language around issues and creating an environment in which areas of improvement become evident in time to rally cooperative solutions. With the compensation changes, job descriptions were "beefed up," better standards of accountability were established and team members were more incentivized, she said.

The old human resources team of eight is now a better-aligned team of 13 thanks to Sullivan's backing of a more comprehensive and strategic HR effort and Handfield's hard work.

"We showed our value. We have to deliver to very, very high expectations," said Handfield, "but I'm up for it." ■

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, LARGE PRIVATE COMPANY

Toray Plastics (America) congratulates **Lisa Ahart**
on her **PBN 2018 C-Suite Award** in the category of
Chief Human Resources and People Officer
at a Public Company



“Lisa Ahart does extraordinary work on behalf of all of Toray’s employees. We are extremely proud that she has received a PBN 2018 C-Suite Award. Lisa’s stewardship has been instrumental in ensuring Toray’s long-term success and viability. She has also done an excellent job in helping us develop an outstanding and tremendously professional workforce in our home states of Rhode Island and Virginia. We are very grateful for her dedication to Toray.”

- Mike Brandmeier, President & CEO



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Employee well-being drives her mission

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

HUMANE RESOURCES: Lisa Abbott, senior vice president of human resources and community affairs, has been working to improve Lifespan's investment in a happy, healthy workforce. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

SINCE STARTING AT Lifespan Corp. in 2016, New York native Lisa Abbott, senior vice president of human resources and community affairs, has sparked new energy within the state's largest health care provider.

Lifespan owns Bradley Hospital, Gateway Healthcare, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital and Hasbro Children's Hospital and The Miriam Hospital. The nonprofit, with a brand mission of "delivering health with care," has adopted a new set of shared values – C.A.R.E., that is, compassion, accountability, respect and excellence. These guiding values – created by a 26-employee team a few months ago – now anchor Lifespan's recognition programs, review processes, methods of delivering care, colleague interactions and more.

"We have embedded it in everything we do. It's all structured around the values," Abbott said, and helps create team members who are not only technically capable but behaviorally competent as well.

The accountability value, for example, doesn't only pertain to employees who see other employees doing something wrong. Peer-to-peer accountability can also involve employees seeing one another doing something right.

"Maybe it was a near-miss, [someone] saved something that could have been a bad outcome," said Abbott. Lifespan wants to know about it and recognize "employee actions that go above and beyond." Video of these good-work stories were featured at the C.A.R.E. Days launch last fall. Abbott says they will likely be gathered via intranet going forward.

Establishing a solid definition of the company's culture is only one aspect of Abbott's efforts to strengthen Lifespan, said President and

"She led a dedicated, cross-functional team of employees."

DR. TIMOTHY J. BABINEAU, Lifespan CEO

CEO Dr. Timothy J. Babineau. Ensuring that the company is a good place to work is also a priority.

And Abbott – who Babineau called "a transitional leader" – has explored all facets of areas in which the company can better serve its 15,000 employees.

"She led a dedicated, cross-functional team of employees and physicians who studied the investments Lifespan makes in its employees to ensure we are competitive, contemporary and cost-effective," wrote Babineau in his C-Suite nomination of Abbott. The result of this look at employee investments resulted in Total Rewards.

Total Rewards is a five-pronged, integrated program that seeks to meet employees where

they are. It has five components: health and wellness; financial well-being; employee experience; life and community; and reward and recognition.

Abbott said the employee financial well-being part of the programming, for example, has myriad, resonant benefits.

"Anybody with financial pressure, such as stress-related issues and illness, [is faced with] barriers to being their very best self, with work stress and home stress," Abbott said. "It impacts presenteeism, costs of leave ... it all sort of feeds on itself."

Financial issues, such as student-loan debt, can impact both groups, she noted. Older workers can be parents of younger workers, in which case Lifespan programming is addressing two parts of the same population facing similar issues.

Tools Lifespan has at its disposal to help include financial speakers, financial-services representatives on-site and financial web tools. A new 401(k) retirement-savings plan with 6 percent corporate match is another method for financial wellness at Lifespan.

Abbott is also helping the company catch up in an area where it lags: technology. A new information technology system will be introduced in the first week of July, putting much of the company's paper processes on computer.

Though it's intuitive and will automate workflow in new areas, she said, adding efficiencies, Lifespan is making sure everyone is comfortable with the new system. Classes are planned, along with on-site computer learning labs where employees can bring their work with them, and they can learn by doing their regular tasks.

"It's going to revolutionize how we work here," said Abbott, creating a more modern, efficient way of doing business that's sure to benefit both employees and patients. ■

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, ENTERPRISE PRIVATE COMPANY



CONGRATULATIONS.

Partridge Snow & Hahn is proud to join Providence Business News in recognizing top C-level executives for public, private and nonprofit entities who are innovators, trailblazers, role models and leaders in the community.

Congratulations to Lisa Dandeneau of Navigant Credit Union, Rachelle Handfield of Collette, and all of the 2018 C-Suite Winners. Your dedication, vision, hard work and commitment to excellence is exemplary.

Learn about our lawyers at psh.com.

**PARTRIDGE
SNOW &
HAHN** LLP



RIPPLE EFFECT: Lisa Ahart, vice president for corporate human resources at Toray Plastics (America), speaks with David Jose, treasurer and chief financial officer.
PBN PHOTO/MIKE SALERNO

HR chief's job gets personal

BY MIKE HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

AT THE BOTTOM OF HER emails, Lisa Ahart, vice president for U.S. corporate human resources at **Toray Plastics (America) Inc.**, has a basic message: “A simple act of caring creates an endless ripple.”

Ahart, Providence Business News’ 2018 C-Suite Awards winner in the Chief Human Resources/People Officer category for public companies, applies that message to her job every day. Located in North Kingstown, Toray is the only manufacturer of precision-performance polyester, polypropylene, metalized and bio-based film, used in flexible and rigid packaging, lidding, graphic, industrial optical and electronic applications. The company has 700 employees and \$400 million in annual gross revenue.

“Small things can have a major impact,” said Ahart, who also heads HR at the company’s Rhode Island site. “It can be a simple thing [such as] helping them with a payroll or benefit issue or difficulties on the job. It’s their life [and] fixing a payroll problem could help them with feeding kids.”

“During Lisa Ahart’s tenure as Toray Plastics (America)’s VP of HR, she has positioned HR as a partner to the business, representing and elevating that vital business link: the human element,” said Michael Brandmeier, president and CEO of Toray locally, in nominating her. “At Toray, Lisa is recognized by her peers and by her senior management team as a partner who helps them find, develop and retain Toray’s ‘best in class’ workforce.”

Toray’s average employee’s tenure is 11 years. Two percent of its workforce has been with the company for 30 years, and approximately 23 percent has been with Toray for more than 20 years.

“Those are remarkable statistics, especially in the context of workplace trends,” said Brandmeier. “Toray has multiple generations of the same family working at the company, a

“Ahart ... has positioned HR as a partner to the business ... **elevating that vital business link: the human element.**”

MICHAEL BRANDMEIER, Toray Plastics (America) Inc. president and CEO

clear demonstration that parents here believe so strongly in Toray’s culture that they have encouraged their children, and in some cases their grandchildren, to seek employment at Toray.”

Fifteen years ago, Ahart was working in the nonprofit field and looking for a new opportunity. At the time, she said, she thought Toray was the best choice, and that has proven to be true. She has been in her current position for eight years.

With 38 years of experience, Toray has benefited from Ahart’s talents and experience as a leader in her field.

“She works tirelessly to keep the organiza-

tion informed,” said Brandmeier, “ensuring that Toray is a legally compliant and ethically responsible company. Lisa and her team monitor industry best practices and analyze compensation programs and benefit practices so Toray remains competitive, while simultaneously maintaining care and concern for the overall workforce.”

Ahart wears another hat at Toray, as the vice president of environmental health and safety, but it’s a hat that’s strongly tied to human resources.

“There is a lot of overlapping,” said Ahart. “You are looking at the safety of employees and their well-being.”

Toray takes a lot of pride in its accomplishments in safety and keeps track of them.

Ahart says safety is handled carefully.

“Under Lisa’s stewardship, Toray has done its best to maintain a safe, distraction-free workplace environment, which we believe has led directly to the cultivation of a powerful, productive and impactful workforce,” said Brandmeier. “Lisa believes strongly that Toray’s top priority is accident prevention and that its primary objective is to maintain a safe and accident-free workplace.”

She personally sponsors employees’ children’s sports teams and works on causes that are close to her heart, including the North Kingstown Pet Refuge and the Hope Alzheimer’s Center.

“Lisa is equally active within the community, making sure that Toray is a proactive, energetic participant within Toray’s home states of Rhode Island and Virginia,” said Brandmeier. “On a personal level, the depth of caring and compassion that Lisa shows to the community is undeniable. She gives generously of her time and money to a variety of community organizations.” ■

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GROWTH INDUSTRY: Joseph O'Connell, vice president of business development at AstroNova, meets with company managers, part of routine walks through the offices. From left, Steve Holbrook, quality assurance manager; O'Connell; Jennifer Pray, marketing communications manager; Mike Natalizia, chief technology officer and vice president of technology partner alliances; and Josh Dumont, plant manager.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

Building bridges to future growth

BY MIKE HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

SINCE HE JOINED AstroNova Inc. 22 years ago, Joseph O'Connell, vice president of business development, has watched the company grow, playing a key role in its success.

"Over his career, Joseph has contributed to the growth and profitability of our organization," said Matthew Cook, vice president of human resources and organizational development. "In the past 10 years, Joseph has been instrumental in financial strategy that has grown the stock value in excess of 275 percent."

An international company located in West Warwick, AstroNova, previously named AstroMed, is known for its development of digital-visualization technology in products, serving industrial, packaging, aerospace and defense markets.

When AstroNova started, it worked in the aerospace and medical-testing area, manufacturing paper-based, data-acquisition recorders.

"It's a dynamite company to work for," said O'Connell. "There is always a good number of things going, and it is an international company. Our business is worldwide, and every day is a new opportunity as we continue to expand."

Growing the company and increasing revenue fall on O'Connell's desk.

"Joseph was instrumental in establishing a financial strategy to grow the business debt-free to its current position of [more than] \$110 million in annualized revenue and \$13.50 share price," said Cook. "He has implemented positive change in the organization by establishing a professional finance function and bringing our focus to global markets and expanding our global teams into Asia and Latin America, and creating the appropriate employment structure and legal entities to grow our global business."

"He has implemented universal [informational technology] platforms and system

'In the past 10 years, [O'Connell] has been instrumental in financial strategy.'

MATTHEW COOK, AstroNova Inc. vice president of human resources and organizational development

upgrades to improve the efficiencies of our process. Joseph was also instrumental in the development of a professional human resources function within the company that is now capable of supporting a substantially larger global business."

AstroNova was a different company when O'Connell joined in March 1996. It was much smaller, led by founder and chairman Albert Ondis, with annual revenue of less than \$44 million and a \$3.50 daily share price.

Being a small company was something that attracted O'Connell to AstroNova. He liked the entrepreneurial spirit that Ondis had created and wanted to be part of it.

"[Ondis] was a classic entrepreneur," he said. "I had been working with a large company and [AstroNova] was a small company that was publicly traded. They had a nice portfolio of companies."

AstroNova was created in 1969 as an inventor and manufacturer of paper-based, data-acquisition recorders for aerospace and medical testing. From those roots the company has grown to \$98.4 million in revenue in 2017 with 353 employees, more than doubling over the last two years.

"Joseph implemented lean manufacturing principles in the financial-analysis function of the business, identifying key capital investments that would drive productivity," said Cook.

In the last four years, AstroNova has acquired four companies, including two in the United States, one in Europe and one in Asia. It has also brought additional businesses and jobs to Rhode Island.

Under O'Connell's direction, AstroNova has set up international hubs in Frankfurt, Germany, and Shanghai to expand worldwide.

"Joseph continues to provide strategic insight and guidance on how to effectively grow the business," said Cook.

Another key to AstroNova's success, according to O'Connell, is the people attracted to work there.

"There is a great respect here [among the employees] and that helps with the environment," he said. "The CEO and all the senior leaders are involved, and that sets the tone throughout the organization. We hire nice people who are smart." ■

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

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TECH IN FRONT: Jacques Laflamme, New England Institute of Technology's chief information officer, has supervised the physical and intellectual expansion of technology for the school during the last three years.
PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

Technology moves upfront at NEIT

BY SARAH PARSONS | Contributing Writer

ALL UNIVERSITIES NEED TECHNOLOGY, but the stakes are particularly high at the **New England Institute of Technology**.

"We have very technical students here," said Jacques Laflamme, NEIT's chief information officer. "If our technology is not stable, available and state-of-the-art, our students notice, and they will challenge us."

Laflamme manages information technology services for all three of New England Tech's campuses, located in East Greenwich and Warwick. He's been focused on upping the university's technological game since he joined as CIO three and a half years ago.

Laflamme oversaw the technology design for a major campus expansion, including a new 50,000-square-foot student center, a fitness center and NEIT's first residence hall. "We had the luxury of a green pasture to work with, so I really wanted to do it right," Laflamme said.

The 400-bed residence hall is equipped with state-of-the-art Wi-Fi, high-definition televisions that students can use for gaming and subscription services such as Netflix, and even wireless-equipped washers and dryers. Collaboration spaces allow students to project content from their laptops to wall screens in order to work together on school projects.

"The design of the wireless network to ensure that our students have the bandwidth available to have access to educational resources, as well as the capacity to support their entertainment needs, was a challenge that Jacques met head-on and achieved," said Douglas Sherman, New England Tech's senior vice president and provost.

The technology design also included the installation of more than 60 digital signage monitors throughout campus buildings.

"We are now able to get information out to students and faculty at a moment's notice," said

'Everybody needs some kind of technology in their daily life.'

JACQUES LAFLAMME, New England Tech chief information officer

Carole Stiles, the school's operations manager. "The impact on the school has been tremendous for not only students but faculty as well."

While Laflamme's previous role at Harvard University focused on network engineering, cybersecurity became a top priority when he came to Rhode Island. Like all universities, New England Tech manages a considerable amount of confidential student information and data. "It's something that keeps us up at night – making sure that we're preventing any breaches and protecting ourselves from vulnerabilities," Laflamme said.

That meant hiring a cybersecurity expert, implementing better firewalls and putting together a disaster recovery plan to ensure that services such as Wi-Fi remain available during storms or other unforeseen events.

Laflamme also implemented a life cycle management program to keep NEIT's equipment in strong working order, including the more than 1,000 computers used by students, faculty and staff, and audio/visual technology used in classrooms. The program employs a "first-in, first-out" mentality for technology – older gear gets replaced by new tech before it becomes outdated.

"There were 10-year-old Gateways running Windows XP when I got here," Laflamme said. "Now, we don't have any machines that are more than 5 years old."

Under Laflamme's direction, the IT department rolled out Microsoft Office 365 campus-wide, implemented new student-housing management software and launched a new web-based payment system.

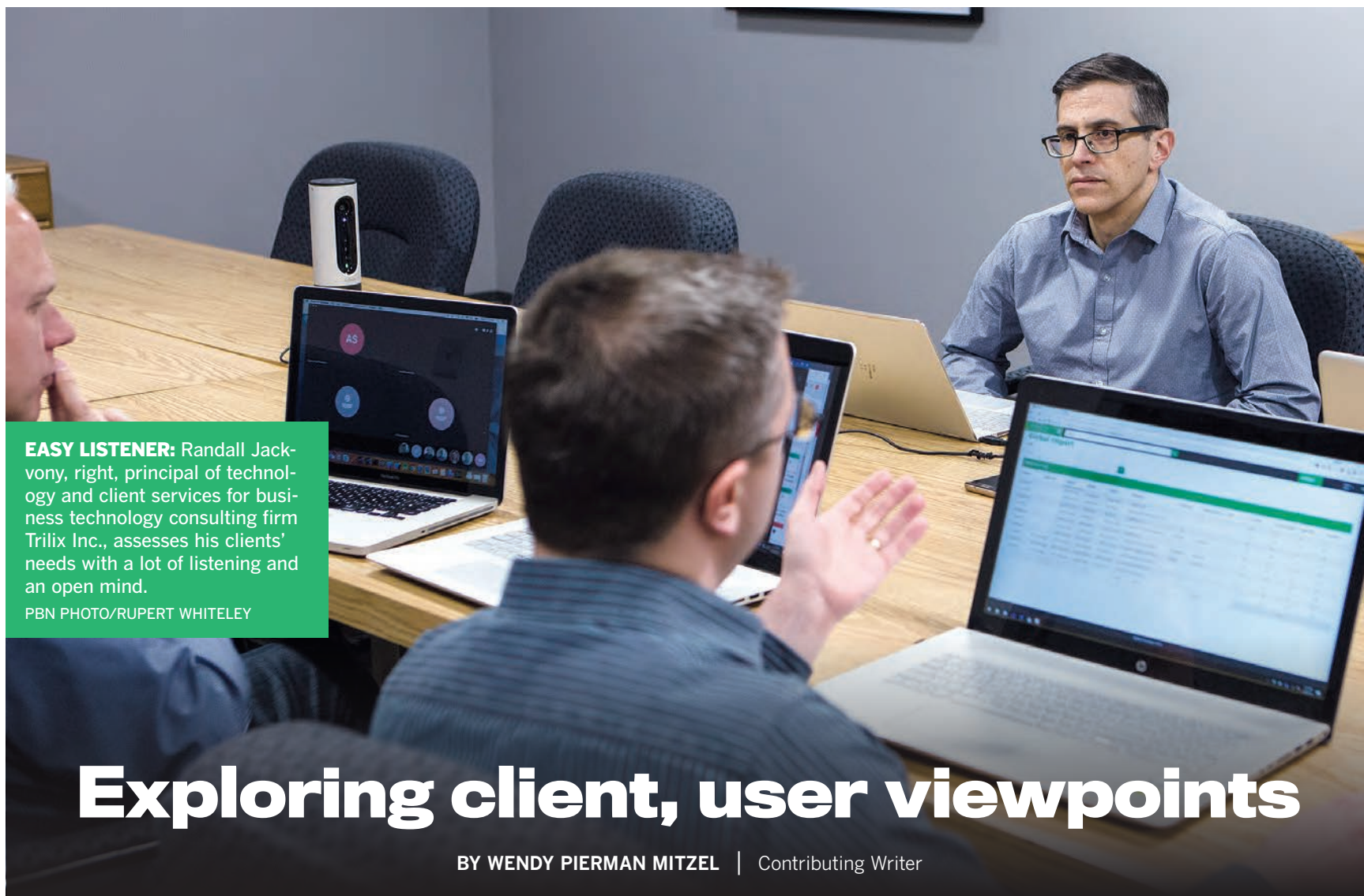
In addition to providing and maintaining high-quality technologies throughout NEIT's campuses, Laflamme wants to change the perception people have about IT. Many people think of IT employees as working behind the scenes on technical issues no one really understands. Laflamme and his 11 full-time staff and 10 student employees aim to be a visible part of the college community.

"The days of IT being back-office are gone," Laflamme said. "We need to be out there and very accessible, because everybody needs some kind of technology in their daily life."

Laflamme regularly meets with department managers and chairs to ask how the IT department is doing, what needs they have and how the team can better service them. He thinks the informal outreach has helped improve the department's favorability throughout the college.

"[Information technology] is much more involved, and approachable and accessible," Laflamme said. "That's a big accomplishment."

CHIEF INFORMATION/TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, NONPROFIT



EASY LISTENER: Randall Jackvony, right, principal of technology and client services for business technology consulting firm Trilix Inc., assesses his clients' needs with a lot of listening and an open mind.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

Exploring client, user viewpoints

BY WENDY PIERMAN MITZEL | Contributing Writer

RANDALL JACKVONY, PRINCIPAL OF TECHNOLOGY and client services for business technology consulting firm **Trilix Inc.**, remembers his lightbulb moment. It came after a constituent's phone call about trash delivery when he served on the Cranston City Council.

"An elderly woman called to talk about the trash bins being left in the road. At the end of the call she said, 'Thank you for your help, I appreciate it,'" Jackvony explained. "I hadn't done anything yet, but I realized it's about giving people a chance to talk about things. For us, as consultants, it's about hearing the real story."

Jackvony leads technology and client services for the 11-person firm in Cranston that launched last May. Trilix was able to hit the ground running thanks to its staff of senior-level leaders, many of whom have worked with each other previously. They began with a plan focused on workplace excellence and customer success. They also liked working with each other.

"I was working at another company when Randy called me to meet," said Lead Architect Scott Cornell. "As soon as I knew he was looking to fill a position, I already made up my mind to join. There are not many former managers I would say I could do that with."

Cornell said Jackvony has the ability to listen to both sides of the information technology world, customers and staff, and understand their needs.

"He does not bring his ego to the table and he respects people's views and ideas," Cornell explained.

"Sometimes we tech people can get caught up in the technology," said Jackvony. "We need to see it as an accelerator for the business, not the reason someone does the job. ... We need to

'For us,
as consultants,
it's about
hearing the
real story.'

**RANDALL JACKVONY, Trilix principal
of technology and client services**

get to the heart of the matter and ask, 'What are we trying to achieve?'"

Still, once technology solutions are necessary, Jackvony and his team are eager to make progress. A certified scrum master, Jackvony leads project- and software-development meetings intent on beginning quickly and making adjustments along the way for changing circumstances, results and scale. Jackvony prefers scrum – a methodology that allows a

team to self-organize and make changes quickly – as a way for all stakeholders to see progress, as well as have a hand in the development. The approach is distinct from previous methods where much of the time is spent planning without development, he said.

Jackvony visits clients' sites and interacts with the people using the technology.

"You get to see what the process is, as opposed to how leaders say it's supposed to work," he explained. "Sometimes the floodgates open, and we can prioritize and help make change."

In order to do that, Jackvony created a workplace-excellence matrix that outlines ways to help clients make those changes. Jackvony calls it a "culture of innovation," and Trilix members practice what it preaches, even on the small things, such as creating a computer application to help monitor feeding of the firm's two beta fish.

Jackvony initially studied history and education, then worked in a pharmacy before returning to school at Carnegie Mellon University for a master's degree in information technology.

"I'm glad I went that path," he said. "Getting that experience has lasted throughout my career."

Jackvony, who served on a state curriculum review committee, said he understands the growing need for technology education. With that in mind, he and his Trilix colleagues mentor people looking to scale up in the tech industry or learn new skills to move them into new professional arenas.

"I find that the most rewarding thing is to change someone's life for the better," he said. The effort is not entirely altruistic. "An added benefit is, as we grow, it's a source for finding talent that we have worked with before." ■



Nursing excellence earns accolades

BY NANCY KIRSCH | Contributing Writer

STEADY HAND: Barbara Riley, right, chief nursing officer, Rhode Island Hospital and Hasbro Children's Hospital, speaks with registered nurses Wendy Rocha, left, and Sarah Smith at Hasbro. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

BARBARA RILEY, senior vice president for patient care services and chief nursing officer for **Rhode Island Hospital** and **Hasbro Children's Hospital**, has been deeply involved in clinical work at **Lifespan Corp.** But these days, health care data is on her plate.

Riley, who has been chief nursing officer since 2008, began her 40-year career as staff nurse in 1979 at Day Kimball Hospital in Connecticut. She joined Lifespan's Rhode Island Hospital and its pediatric division, Hasbro Children's Hospital, as a director in 2002, taking on a number of leadership roles over the years, including the hospital's responses to The Station nightclub fire in 2003 and swine flu, as well as managing clinical planning for RIH's new emergency department in 2005.

Today her job is less hands-on.

"Thanks to a new partnership with GE Healthcare, we are using its health care analytics expertise and our patient care expertise" to identify and implement ways to improve and facilitate high-quality care for patients moving through the hospital system, Riley said.

Although the partnership just launched this year, resulting changes are coming, she said. Next month, RIH and HCH will implement an evidence-based use of telemetry – cardiac monitoring outside of intensive care units.

"Monitoring is extremely expensive, time-consuming for nurses and leads to 'alarm fatigue,'" Riley said. "This [one improvement] will reduce unnecessary alarms and the cost of care and will get patients into beds faster."

Riley and Dr. Sajeew Hada, chief of hospital medicine at Rhode Island Hospital, are co-leading a systemwide revamp – initially at the 719-bed hospital and eventually throughout Lifespan – to address the challenges incurred by increasing demands for limited patient space and capped or declining reimbursement

'We ... give nurses the authority to do what they're trained to do.'

BARBARA RILEY,
Rhode Island Hospital and Hasbro
Children's Hospital chief nursing officer

rates.

Those challenges include the rising cost of health care and increasing patient demand for limited beds and resources, since the hospital is not planning to expand, she said.

As a member of RIH and HCH's executive team, Riley oversees more than 2,450 staff members. She has created a professional practice model for nurses and has elevated the stature of professionally trained nurses in a collaborative model of care, said Margaret M. Van Bree, RIH and HCH president.

To that end, Riley said, "I try to hire good leaders [who] tap into excellence in staff, and create structures and supportive environments to help nurses."

She created an organizational structure supporting that professionalism, with unit-based nursing councils that address issues, evaluate

quality scores and create staff-level ownership.

"We include [nurses] in decision-making about patient care ... give nurses the authority to do what they're trained to do," said Riley, noting the respectful, collaborative relationships among and between RIH and HCH's nurses and physicians.

Twice each month, Riley and Deborah Coppola, associate chief nursing officer, host breakfast and lunch roundtable discussions with staff nurses from different specialties, which nurtures networking across disciplines.

"We bring up the elephant in the room. We don't just get positive feedback," said Riley. "We explain the reasons and rationales for decisions so that they don't seem arbitrary or capricious."

Under Riley's leadership, nursing excellence has been recognized. "Through Barbara's leadership, three units at RIH [and] HCH have received the national Beacon Award for nursing excellence," Van Bree said.

The cardiothoracic intensive care unit was the first such unit in New England to win a Beacon Award from the American Association of Critical Care Nurses for exceptional patient care and healthy work environments. The medical-surgical unit was the nation's fourth such unit to be so recognized. The pediatric intensive care unit is one of a few such units nationally to twice receive the Beacon Award.

The frequent recipient of leadership awards, Riley is a "great example of a service leader ... there to help others be successful," Van Bree said. "She's a lifelong learner. She just recently finished her doctorate while working full time. She helps people focus on what's most important to our patients and families." ■

CHIEF NURSING OFFICER



INSIDE KNOWLEDGE:

Kyrie Perry, chief public affairs officer at HealthSource R.I., reviews the week's events during a team meeting. Her initiatives are credited with a 35 percent growth of "young invincibles" on the HSRI rolls.

PBN PHOTO/MIKE SALERNO

Perry's prowess grows HSRI ranks

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

HEALTHSOURCE R.I. bucked enrollment expectations for 2018, growing paying enrollees in its individual health insurance plans by 5 percent. But more importantly, 35 percent of new customers to the state's health insurance exchange were in the 18-34-year-old age range, the "young invincibles" that are so important to keeping the risk pool for health insurance healthy. And Chief Public Affairs Officer Kyrie Perry had no small part in that achievement.

According to Zachary W. Sherman, director of HealthSource, the program saw more than 8,000 new enrollees for coverage in 2018, which is a 45 percent increase from the previous year.

What is especially impressive, said Sherman, is that the percentage of young invincibles among the new enrollees grew from 25 percent in 2017 to 35 percent this year.

"This increase in younger customers marks a big win for HealthSource RI and the stability of Rhode Island's individual market overall," Sherman wrote in his C-Suite nomination of Perry, since the age bracket generally requires fewer services, allowing their membership to help pay for older, more frequent users of health services.

Perry understands the mindset of the young invincibles instinctively, seeing as she is 26 herself.

Perry formerly worked at Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island as a public-relations specialist. Before that, she was a communications associate in the office of former Gov. Lincoln D. Chafee. She is a graduate of Roger Williams University in Bristol and active in the community.

For instance, she is professional-development chair with the United Way of Rhode Island Young Leaders Circle, helping with collaborative volunteer projects and with profes-

'This increase in younger customers marks a big win for HealthSource RI.'

ZACHARY W. SHERMAN,
HealthSource R.I. director

sional development in the community.

No doubt her connections there, as well as mentoring she does with RWU students, played into her success in bringing younger enrollees to HealthSource.

When Perry arrived at the exchange in fall 2016, open enrollment was just starting. The organization already had quite a bit of collateral materials it had produced, Perry said.

"When I first said I wanted to overhaul collateral, people were a bit surprised ... but then everyone was excited," she said.

She also led modifications to the marketing

schedule, which usually ramps up just before annual open enrollment. Perry launched a brand-awareness campaign a month earlier, "We Work for You," profiling actual HealthSource team members. The goal, said Sherman, was to add a more-human element and regain trust following a previous period of less-than-exceptional customer service.

"We added new pages to the website, a new color palette, online support tools, research to back up our messaging, and added texting services to communicate with members," said Perry. "We did quite an overhaul to the look and feel of the marketing and targeted the minority population with the most uninsured."

Those efforts began with fundamental changes in the department's approach.

"We have more acronyms than anywhere else," Perry said of health care insurance. "But when you stop and get to the core message, you can be more simplistic. ... One of the reasons for our open-enrollment awareness campaign was because people weren't even sure if [the Affordable Care Act] was here for them," with President Donald Trump's administration taking the reins in the White House, she said.

Perry is out to connect residents with information that empowers them to make healthy choices at the same time she and her colleagues keep an eye on a fluctuating industry.

Establishing relationships with stakeholders is one way to address potential changes down the road, Perry said, along with exploring what can be done on a state level, because the effects of the federal tax overhaul may create a situation in which HealthSource pivots again.

"All signs indicate that premiums will go up," said Perry, producing more uninsured, a setback to her organization's goal. "We may have to change our messaging, depending on where we land." ■



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