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2018

CAREER ACHIEVER

SANDRA J. PATTIE

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BUSINESS Women



Webster Bank congratulates this year's Business Women honorees.

It's women like you who are leading the way, breaking barriers and serving as role models for so many – in Rhode Island, New England and across the country.

We are proud to be part of such an important event.

Thank you for everything you are doing to help our industry, our communities, and so many future women in business.



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The Executive Development Center at Bryant University

congratulates the winners of the 2018 Business Women Awards. We applaud their professional accomplishments and value the importance of lifelong learning in order to achieve success in life and in business. edc.bryant.edu



Citrin Cooperman congratulates the accomplished women being recognized.

You are an inspiration to all of us. As advocates and advisors to women, we recognize the challenges you've had to overcome. Luckily, you don't have to go it alone. At Citrin Cooperman, we provide strategic accounting and financial advisory services to help you meet your business objectives. www.citrincooperman.com



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FROM THE EDITOR

People are what pay off

TEN YEARS AGO, PBN inaugurated its Business Women Awards luncheon, and it remains one of our most



enjoyable events. The energy of the year's winners, combined with returning honorees, creates an atmosphere

that is supportive and celebratory at the same time. That combination provides a great break from the daily grind and is a reminder that the center of any business' success is its people.

The top two winners this year are perfect examples of that truth. Sandra J. Pattie, the BankNewport CEO and president who is our Career Achiever, has reached the pinnacle through a level of diligence that is rare.

She didn't attend college right out of high school, but soon after graduation she realized that reality was holding her back. Eight years of community college and undergraduate night work produced her degree, and Pattie was on her way.

Since taking the top job at BankNewport in 2012, the bank has seen an annual growth rate of 16 percent, proof that her personal sacrifice and hard work has produced similar corporate results.

While Kathleen Malin has invested in her personal success, the Outstanding Mentor in the 2018 Business Women Awards program takes seriously her role helping others advance their own careers.

Since being mentored as an intern to her college's president, Malin has spent a large part of her significant energy reserves on helping others. It could be teaching someone to communicate better or it could be lending moral and strategic support as a new venture is launched. But in all cases, she leaves the region better off for her efforts.

The presenting sponsor of the 2018 Business Women program is Webster Bank, while the partner sponsors are Bryant University's Executive Development Center, Citrin Cooperman and CVS Health Corp.

Mark S. Murphy
Editor



Initiative taken leads to success

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

DILIGENT DECADES: Sandra J. Pattie, president and CEO at BankNewport, credits her success to years of hard work, and taking on challenges with confidence.

PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

BANKNEWPORT PRESIDENT and CEO Sandra J. Pattie says she's proud to be counted among the presidents throughout the bank's nearly 200-year history, but looks forward to a day when being the first female leader of an organization, as she is, will be more commonplace.

"I get asked all the time if I have a mentor program for women" in the bank, Pattie said. "I don't. I think mentoring should be for anyone who shows talent, male or female. It will be a wonderful day when we don't have to consider a person's gender."

Pattie, who has worked at the bank for 34 years, is also president and CEO of OceanPoint Financial Partners MHC, the bank's holding company, and chair of OceanPoint Insurance Agency Inc., a BankNewport subsidiary. Board chair of the United Way of Rhode Island, she has been involved with that organization for more than 30 years. She said she appreciates the nonprofit's transparency and data-driven initiatives.

The back story to her current positions involves decades of diligence.

Raised in Rhode Island in what she calls a blue-collar family, Pattie didn't go to college right away. But she realized a lack of a degree was holding her back when, after high school, she went to work for an insurance company, only to learn that a woman who took the same training program she did earned \$100 more a week – because her co-worker had a college degree.

It was all Pattie needed to hear.

Pattie earned associate and bachelor's degrees, from Community College of Rhode Island in Warwick and Providence College, respectively, in business management and account-

ing. Both degrees were earned while Pattie was working full time. Her bachelor's degree took eight years of night school.

She started out at BankNewport as a consumer loan officer, proceeding to manage nearly every part of the bank, leading to CEO. Along the way, she also earned a certified financial planner designation when the bank purchased its first insurance agency, a way to gain a holistic understanding of the financial-services industry, she said. Pattie earned the certification in 2001, over about three years,

while working full time.

"You don't move up without some level of sacrifice," said Pattie. "I was told by senior management that branches would be part of the distribution network. Well, if I am going to be responsible, I should understand it," she said.

Part of Pattie's success is due to her willingness to put herself out there in this way.

"Sandy's message is consistent: Work hard, take a chance when offered new opportunities, don't be afraid to make mistakes," said Wendy Kagan, the bank's director of employee and community engagement.

Since 2012 – the year Pattie, the bank's former chief operations officer, became CEO – the bank has seen annual growth of 16 percent. With \$1.5 billion in assets, it is the fourth-largest Rhode Island bank, with about 4 percent of all bank deposits in the state, according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

But employee feedback is also a priority. Last year, a change was made in vacation time, with more time added, the direct result of employee concerns, Pattie said.

Pattie knows most of the bank's 300 employees by name, due not only to the fact that she has been with the company for such a long time but the fact that many employees have been with the bank for many years. Turnover is not an issue, which Pattie hopes is due in part to her accessibility.

"I eat my lunch in the kitchen. I walk around, I attend some of the same training sessions. Everyone has a choice of where to live and work. They make a conscious decision to work here and are proud of the successes we share," she said. ■

'You don't move
up without
**some level of
sacrifice.**'

SANDRA J. PATTIE,
BankNewport president and CEO



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I CAN AND I WILL.

We are thankful to PBN's Business Women Awards for giving our Rhode Island business community a forum to recognize such talented and tenacious women, working hard to make an impact in their roles and serve as leaders in their field. On behalf of Citrin Cooperman, we congratulate all award winners. You truly inspire us!



RENEE ALOISIO

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Patient listener makes effective mentor

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Kathleen Malin, vice president of technology and operations management at the Rhode Island Foundation, has been an enthusiastic and effective mentor ever since receiving strong guidance early in her career.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

KATHLEEN MALIN, vice president of technology and operations management at the **Rhode Island Foundation**, has been with the nonprofit for 13 years, managing facilities, juggling logistics and meeting evolving challenges.

It's a busy role.

But throughout her 30-year career – mainly in schools – she has managed to mentor hundreds of students and colleagues. Her dedication to serving as a resource for others shows no signs of stopping.

She has mentored young children, elderly nuns and everyone in between, it seems, including teens and continuing-education learners.

Malin has mentored through the Rhode Island Foundation – the biggest funder of nonprofits in the state – the Women in Technology group through the Tech Collective; the Community Foundation Technology Leadership Group; CyberPatriots, a Woonsocket middle school group; and at Lincoln Technical Institute, to name a few.

Her mentees have turned into fans.

"I was trying to get back to the workforce after a sabbatical. She provided me direction and guidance," wrote Abha Sharma of Family Services of Rhode Island in her support of Malin for this award.

"I experienced firsthand her willingness to draw staff into her professional centers of influence," said Shonte Davidson, who worked with Malin several years ago. "Kathleen enables her mentees to don the mentor cap, too. This is incredibly important, because in business we need to form reciprocal relationships."

Reciprocal is how Malin sees the cycle of mentorship. She's had several important role models and career teachers throughout her life and enjoys giving back. She recounts the wisdom she gained early on as an intern for Sister Marie Antoine, her college president at Immac-

'I experienced firsthand her willingness to draw staff into her **professional centers of influence.**'

SHONTE DAVIDSON,
Mentee of Kathleen Malin

ulata University in Frazer, Pa., for example.

"From her, I learned how to run board meetings, work with VIPs, how to deal with people," Malin said. It's the kind of learning that can't easily be garnered from a book or computer program, she said.

Malin loves learning in all its forms.

After college, she went on to earn two master's degrees from New England College in Henniker, N.H., including an MBA.

"I've appreciated the value in not just learning a particular topic, but learning with people," she said. Nuances are often part of this. She remembers having to change her communication style with one of her manag-

ers in her career to collaborate with him more effectively, for example.

"Part of it is just working with people on things like that. A lot of the time when I work with my mentees, it's on how to better communicate what they need or how they are coming across," skills she said aren't always taught in technology courses.

Teaching or offering moral support to someone in a technology environment can be challenging, as there is so much to learn and so many constant changes. Malin understands those who are frustrated with new technological advances and is patient in working with them.

"I am calm, and my secret is that I read the instructions first," she laughed. "I try and ease people into it." Remembering that she once learned everything she teaches means she's empathetic, Malin said.

She's also a great sounding board and source of support.

Carrie Majewski of Trilix, founder of the Women in Leadership Nexus, has known Malin for two years, during which time Majewski formed the women's leadership and empowerment group.

"I was unsure if I could do it while working a full-time job and not having access to investment dollars," Majewski said. "Kathleen dreamed with me, listened to me, explored with me. She passed along the lessons she had learned. ... She sponsored my first event. She mentored me in a way she knew I needed it."

Meanwhile, a new intern will be starting at the Rhode Island Foundation soon, said Malin – offering yet another opportunity for her to share her unique brand of wisdom and generosity. ■

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Stories spark PR firm's growth

BY MICHAEL S. HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

NO STANDING STILL: From left, Cassie Dana, event coordinator at DK Communications; owner Dyana Koelsch; and Jane D'Arcy, the director of marketing, review a project in the PR firm's Providence office.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

RHODE ISLAND is full of stories to tell, and Dyana Koelsch is a master storyteller. That makes for a perfect situation for the owner of Providence-based **DK Communications**.

"I love being a reporter," said the award-winning, former political and investigative reporter at WJAR-TV NBC 10. "It's a lot of fun, and every day is different. Rhode Island has a lot of different kinds of stories, and it is a wonderful place to be."

The 1979 University of Rhode Island graduate has built a one-person office into a growing public relations company, working with both private and public companies, and it has become nationally recognized.

"DK has shown proven results for its clients. Whether it is increased enrollment for universities or increased revenue for private business, DK has supported all of its clients in reaching their goals," said attorney Mark Dana, a partner at Dana and Dana, which is a client of DK Communications. Dana is also Koelsch's husband.

DK Communications focuses on helping companies get their message out. Included among the company's roster of clients are R.I. Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp., Roger Williams University, Providence Water, KMC Cyolo-Cross Festival, Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, North Atlantic Distribution Inc., The National Children's Fund, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, Providence Innovation & Designs District and Daniele Inc.

As an Edward R. Murrow Award winner for broadcasting, Koelsch traveled all over the world reporting during her career. A major accomplishment for her was that her reporting led to legislation tightening the laws against pedophiles.

After working in public relations for the Rhode Island Judiciary, Koelsch decided 10 years ago to go out on her own and started DK Communications all by herself.

'You have to have
... the willingness to
**learn and
embrace new
things.**'

DYANA KOELSCH,
DK Communications owner

"My life has always been about writing and creating stories," she said. "Shifting to public relations just made sense."

With her experience as a radio and television reporter and magazine writer, Koelsch saw how the combination of audio, visual and the written word can deliver a powerful message to her clients.

"The basis of it all is the same," she said. "It is storytelling."

One of the reasons for the success of DK Communications is its ability to combine storytelling, video production and social media campaigns.

"All of these approaches have assisted all types of business over the years," said Dana.

Koelsch uses these tools and others, such as the internet and social media platforms that weren't even around when she started telling

stories.

"You have the creativity of telling a story on different platforms," she said. "It's about people. It's the same as journalism."

DK Communications' areas of focus: health and wellness; economic development; commercial, retail and consumer-targeted PR; corporate communications; and litigation communications. But improving and growing is part of the strategy Koelsch uses when helping her own company expand.

"You have to have flexibility and the willingness to learn and embrace new things," she said.

What also helps DK Communications is the people Koelsch has been able to bring in to her group.

"I love my team," she said. "They are really creative people who are working hard."

Koelsch takes advantage of the state's talent to staff her company and hire freelancers for DK Communications.

"You also have so many creative companies and people here," she said. "There is also so much talent in the classrooms."

She is also involved in civic activities, including being a member of the Emma Pendleton Bradley Hospital board of trustees, a conservator of the Providence Public Library, a board member of the Tanner Hill Children's Home, and as a strong supporter of Meeting Street School.

"Dyana has promoted women in the workplace both at DK and on the numbers of boards she has been on," said Dana, in nominating his wife for the award.

For Koelsch, it's all part of telling the story of Rhode Island, its people, places and businesses. ■

Linking clients to their markets

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

BY THE TIME TribalVision Senior Marketing Manager Morgan Durfee joined the Warwick-based, outsourced-marketing company, she'd already led a successful startup for several years and won funding in two business competitions.

Working with a few classmates at Bryant University in Smithfield, filtered water-bottle company Inspire Green was born. Inspire Green won a Babson College business competition in Massachusetts and placed second in the Rhode Island Business Plan Competition, netting \$40,000 in funding and about \$100,000 worth of professional support.

Not bad for a 19-year-old CEO. "I learned a ton," said Durfee about the eco-friendly container venture, a means to cut down on plastic bottle waste. "We had five people total in our organization, but we all wanted to do other things after college. My passion is better aligned with TribalVision."

Durfee was the first intern ever

at TribalVision.

She worked her way up to her current position, which both grants and requires her to deliver for client companies a broader-reaching perspective.

In a strategic role, Durfee now works with client marketing managers to oversee their teams and review their client-facing deliverables, she said. Problem-solving – with return on investment never far from mind – is another facet of Durfee's position.

"A lot of companies we work for have trouble getting new business leads," Durfee said. "We help B2B and B2C companies focus on getting new business in the door as well as re-engagement strategies, [figuring out] what a company can



USING ALL THE TOOLS: Morgan Durfee, senior marketing manager at TribalVision, uses multiple media to get her clients' messages across, with video taking an important role in campaigns.
PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

do to be in a place to better position themselves," she said.

Building campaigns, email and marketing automation, and digital advertising are part of the package as well.

Video is an area for which many clients need encouragement, Durfee noted.

One area in which video can work exceptionally well is by giving marketing messaging a behind-the-scenes feel. TribalVision and Durfee recently helped out with a Dave's Marketplace video showing a fish manager going to a dock and buying fish – going a step beyond a

mere statement to Dave's customers of, "We employ fishermen," she said.

But it's about more than show and tell.

"Our role is telling the client, 'You have some really incredible customers that would make for amazing client testimonials,' " she said, making for relatable, easily digested videos connecting them with their markets. ■

Committed to helping all Rhode Islanders

For 17 years, Carolyn has brought passion, energy, and commitment to Blue Cross's efforts to improve the lives of Rhode Islanders by improving their health. Whether she is marshalling the troops of employees headed out across the state for our annual Blue across Rhode Island day of service, or cheering on teachers as they learn to create meaningful recess experiences for Rhode Island schoolchildren, Carolyn leans in and champions the community outreach and involvement she so strongly believes in. Her work helps us touch the lives of thousands of Rhode Island families in every community, every year.

Carolyn Belisle

Managing Director, Community Relations

Woman to Watch honoree in Professional Services

Congratulations to Carolyn and all the other PBN Business Women honorees!



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5/18 EC-243690





Wealth of talent spurs asset growth

BY MICHAEL S. HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

BUILDING WEALTH: Edythe M. De Marco, founder of The De Marco Group at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management in Providence, wants to encourage more women to work in the financial-services industries, and takes pride in training talented people to grow their clients' assets.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

YOU CAN TALK about how Edythe M. De Marco joined **Merrill Lynch Wealth Management** right out of college and founded **The De Marco Group** in Providence, directing a company with nearly \$500 million in client assets under her management.

And that is one very interesting side of De Marco, but it is not the full story. There is much more here than the tale of a very successful businesswoman, who has gone from being an entry-level employee to being recognized as a leader and a top financial adviser in the country.

"The De Marco Group has more than 110 years of combined experience helping affluent individuals, multiple generations of families, entrepreneurs, corporate executives, women in transition and members of the LGBT community pursue their financial dreams and goals in using a unique, customized, goals-based wealth-management approach," wrote William F. Hatfield, the president of **Bank of America Rhode Island**, who nominated De Marco for the award.

Bank of America completed its acquisition of Merrill Lynch on Jan. 1, 2009.

De Marco is recognized as a leader at both Bank of America and in the Rhode Island community. Chances are if you name an honor or an award, she has received it. In 2016, De Marco received the Ronald McDonald House Women's Leadership award. Barron's has honored her on a variety of top financial advisers lists from 2009 to 2016, while Forbes put her on their Best-in-State Wealth Advisors List in 2018.

When the Los Angeles native was an undergraduate majoring in finance, she was thinking about going in another direction. Fortunately for Merrill Lynch and her clients, a paper on banking and money caught the eye of her future employer, and her brokerage career was off and running.

The learning hasn't stopped since. Merrill

'A smart leader is not the smartest person in the room.'

EDYTHE M. DE MARCO,
The De Marco Group,
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management/
Bank of America managing director

Lynch and Bank of America have given De Marco the chance to expand her knowledge and move up in her career.

"I have been given a lot of opportunities to grow in the company," De Marco said.

And opportunity is something she wants to give other women in the financial-services industry, which is needed, according to De Marco.

She points to the Ram Fund at the Univer-

sity of Rhode Island, which sponsors an investment challenge as an example of getting more women interested in financial services.

De Marco enjoys having the opportunity to talk to and help women get into her field. Women business majors are electing to go into other fields, such as accounting, rather than a career in financial advising.

As for her own success, since moving from California to Rhode Island for her job, De Marco has been able to build her team to the point where they have been very successful in helping their clients grow their investments to retire comfortably.

"I'm able to hire really, really smart people," said De Marco, who has a nine-member team. "A smart leader is not the smartest person in the room. They are really fabulous, great, wonderful people."

Importantly, after De Marco hires them, she lets her staff do their jobs while making sure to communicate to them how much the company is doing.

De Marco and her team share their talents with organizations and charities as volunteers. That's the other part of the story of what The De Marco Group and Merrill Lynch are doing in the Rhode Island community. The entire company gave 27,000 volunteer hours and \$2 million in philanthropy efforts last year.

People are encouraged to do what they feel passionate about and are given the resources to help them out as volunteers. One of her employees takes homeless people out to dinner.

"They are committed to serving with a spirit of excellence and compassion," said Hatfield. ■

A nurturing eye on the bottom line

BY NANCY KIRSCH | Contributing Writer

JENNIFER HOGENCAMP, BlumShapiro's only female partner in its 80-person Cranston office, appreciates the public accounting firm's environment, where teamwork, trust and open dialogue create strong, positive working relationships.

In addition to mentoring others to help them make progress in their careers, she also contributes to the firm's bottom line. She established the firm's hospitality practice in 2014. Today, it represents a \$2 million line of business.

With 10 male partners, Hogenkamp expressed pride in serving as a role model for the younger generation.

"You can have a family and a successful career and be energetic ... though it's tough," said Hogenkamp, who has two children.

Fortunately, things are changing, she says, and women are seeing their value to the public accounting industry recognized. It's no surprise, then, that she is the sponsoring partner of the firm's Women Who Lead!, an initiative

focused on mentoring and empowering women to attain equal leadership positions within the firm and educating men and women to recognize and address workplace biases.

One of PBN's 40 Under Forty in 2016, Hogenkamp co-chairs the Best Buddies board and is actively engaged in the Rhode Island Hospitality Association, which named her Volunteer of the Year in 2017. Under Hogenkamp's presidency, the New England Chapter of Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals has increased its membership by 10 percent, funded more than \$12,000 in college scholarships for students considering hospitality careers and is working to establish a Johnson & Wales University student chapter.



VANGUARD: Jennifer Hogenkamp, center, BlumShapiro's sole female partner, created BlumShapiro's successful hospitality practice and is working to mentor other women in leadership positions at the firm. She speaks with Sarah Morre, left, senior accountant, and Matt Godino, audit manager.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

A captain of her Division II field hockey team at Bentley College, Hogenkamp gained self-confidence and leadership skills by playing college sports. She's observed those skills, as well as the ability to work well on a team, in other professional women who played college sports. "Being an over-achiever in athletics ... carries over to everything," she said.

Hogenkamp truly cares about the people at the firm. She mentors them, takes them under her wing and counsels them, said Greg Cabral, BlumShapiro Rhode Island office managing partner.

With an eye on the bottom line,

she said, "If people are happy and enjoy their work, the monetary growth will come." ■

Congratulations,

Erin Darmetko!

We applaud our friend and colleague, **Erin Darmetko**, who was named the Technical Services Woman to Watch as part of the 2018 **PBN Business Women Awards**.

Congratulations to Erin and the other award recipients!



CONGRATULATIONS Kathleen Malin

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work mentoring the
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of tomorrow.*



RHODE ISLAND
FOUNDATION



Spotlight on data reveals the path

BY SARAH PARSONS | Contributing Writer

DATA-DRIVEN: Colleen Ramos, vice president of finance at Women & Infants Hospital, presents the data the hospital needs to chart the best path to the future.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

IF YOU WANT to improve financial performance, start with good data.

That's the approach Colleen Ramos takes at **Women & Infants Hospital** in Providence. As the hospital's new vice president of finance, Ramos is working to overcome what so many medical facilities struggle with – breaking even.

"It's hard in health care," Ramos said. "What we get paid doesn't always cover our cost. We're always looking for new ways to do something different."

For Ramos, that means using data to make everyone at the hospital – from clinicians to department managers – more financially literate.

For example, to calculate how much the hospital pays to deliver a baby born to a drug-addicted mother, Ramos looks not only at the cost of delivery, but also at the costs involved with treating babies' underlying conditions. She then brings this data to clinicians, who oftentimes have no idea how much various treatments or equipment cost, or what rates insurance companies pay out.

"You know the outcomes clinically, but you don't know the outcomes from a business aspect," Ramos said. "And once you know that, it can help you make a different decision that doesn't impact the clinical outcome."

Ramos uses the data to work with clinicians on decisions that benefit patients and the hospital's financial performance. Sometimes this means negotiating with insurance companies to pay the hospital a higher rate. Other times it involves educating clinicians on which supplies are most economical.

"[Colleen] has the ability to make data and finance user-friendly to the leaders at Women & Infants," said Diane Rafferty, the hospital's interim president and chief operating officer.

Ramos also implemented new software systems to improve the hospital's data-gathering game. She rolled out StrataJazz a little more

'[Colleen] has the ability to make data and finance user-friendly.'

DIANE RAFFERTY,
Women & Infants Hospital,
interim president and COO

than a year ago, which brings together more than 100 feeds a day from Care New England's billing and clinical systems. This allows financial analysts to see which services the hospital is breaking even on and where it's losing money, as well as the factors that influence those outcomes, such as cost structures and physician utilization rates.

The software system spurred a new policy at Women & Infants. "Before anybody buys a new piece of equipment or starts a new service or makes any type of decision that would impact the bottom line, we have to provide this type of

analysis before they do that," Ramos said.

Ramos also works to educate the hospital's department managers through an ongoing data curriculum. Budgeting and projection software compiles monthly reports for each department, showing how much revenue they've generated, what they spent on salaries and supplies, how productive they've been and more. Department managers have the option of taking more-advanced trainings with the software to drill down into specific areas. This can allow them to quickly spot and fix issues such as payroll errors or excessive overtime.

"It allows frontline managers to monitor their activity, and be responsible for their productivity and speak to that, and be able to use that to change course," Ramos said.

Ramos' efforts to improve financial literacy at the hospital have earned her accolades from her colleagues.

"She also loves to teach and has developed her team to work at the top of their skill set and to continue to learn and grow professionally," said Gail Robbins, senior vice president of finance and planning at Care New England.

Ramos stepped into her current role in 2018 after serving as Care New England's director of strategic financial planning since 2017. She has 30 years of experience in the health care industry, holding finance roles at hospitals and medical facilities in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York and Washington, D.C.

"Colleen is extremely knowledgeable in decision support and budgeting for hospitals," said Marcia Caster, a senior financial analyst who reports to Ramos. "She is always willing to show you all she knows." ■

Changing behavior through software

BY MICHAEL S. HARDMAN | Contributing Writer

WHEN SARA S. JOHNSON was young, she was asked what she wanted to do with her life, and she had an answer.

“Early on, in junior high, I wanted to be a psychologist,” said Johnson. “I have no idea how I knew.”

Johnson is now the co-president and CEO of **Pro-Change Behavior Systems Inc.** and one of Providence Business News’ Women to Watch in the Health Care Services industry category.

A South Kingstown company, Pro-Change is celebrating its 20th year in business as a research and development company, using evidence-based behavior-change solutions for better health and well-being. Johnson’s company of 17 nationally recognized behavior-change scientists and software developers work to develop well-being improvement programs with a software platform. The company has a trade secret methodology and develops its own software platforms.

“I definitely love my job,” said Johnson, who earned her doctorate in psychology in 1998 at the University of Rhode Island, where today she is also an adjunct faculty member. “We are making an impact on people’s health and wellness.”

Johnson was named as a Top 10 Health Promotion Professional by The Wellness Council of America in 2015.

“In her 20 years at Pro-Change Behavior Systems, she has been responsible for generating and leading the implementation of innovative research and development opportunities, as well as creating and expanding strategic business alliances,” wrote Stephan Rodriguez, alumni manager of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program run through the Community College of Rhode Island, who nominated Johnson



ALTERING CEO: Sara S. Johnson, co-president and CEO of Pro-Change Behavior Systems, has led lifestyle-changing interventions improving people’s health through psychologically directed software applications. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

for the PBN award following her completion of the program last summer. “She has been the principal investigator on [more than] \$6 million in National Institutes of Health grants to examine the effectiveness of transtheoretical, model-based inventions.”

Johnson is also the co-editor of *The Art of Health Promotion*, which links research for effective strategies for lifestyle changes and health improvement.

Johnson says it is important in the explosion of health and wellness information to make sure you are using the best information, which Pro-Change provides with

its research.

With an increase of people focusing on their health and wellness, Johnson’s team is taking areas such as sleep, e-cigarettes and opioids and developing a text-based program for caretaking.

“With the caregivers, it is managing themselves,” said Johnson. “We want to come up with a text-based system because their lives are so busy.” ■



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“Let her sleep
For when she wakes,
She will move mountains.”

-Napoleon Bonaparte

Congratulations to DK Communications President Dyana Koelsch and all the strong, amazing women being recognized for their valuable leadership roles.



Decisive direction delivering results

BY NANCY KIRSCH | Contributing Writer

DETERMINED LEADER: Head of School Suzanne Fogarty has led Lincoln School through many recent changes with a committed attitude and speedy execution.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

SINCE SEPTEMBER 2014, Lincoln School, the nation's only all-girl school rooted in Quaker values, has undergone significant transformations with Head of School Suzanne Fogarty's dynamic leadership.

At her initiative, Lincoln established partnerships with Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, the Steel Yard and other organizations; discontinued the Advanced Placement program in favor of independent research and more elective opportunities; offered educational travel programs to India and Cuba; and built a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture and math) Hub for Girls.

Upper School students can enroll in college-level, credit-bearing classes in Brown University's School of Engineering and RISD's School of Architecture. "[They] are a great collaboration and are target areas where girls and women are underrepresented," said Fogarty. Learning blacksmithing, jewelry making and welding at the Steel Yard, as Upper and Middle schools' students do, said Fogarty, "is a provocative way to define female strength."

Fogarty believes that learning is no longer relegated to the school's bricks-and-mortar facilities, and expanding Lincoln's campus to include these partnerships is critically important. "We want Lincoln students to bring the world back to our ... campus," Fogarty said.

Under Fogarty's leadership and in partnership with The World Leadership School in Boulder, Colo., Lincoln launched the India Program, a trimesterlong program that culminates in students spending two weeks in India, including Mumbai and a village, Chinchoti.

"Unlike other global programs, we return to the same place every year," said Fogarty. "They know us [and we are] building relationships [around] what we have in common and honoring our differences."

She described students' experiences of navigating a city such as Mumbai and living with host families in Chinchoti as "mind-blowing." Last summer, Lincoln School introduced a Cuba-focused program.

'Something that
needs to be done
... moves from
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rapid period of time.'

TIM COGGINS,
Lincoln School,
treasurer of the board of trustees

Under Fogarty's leadership, Lincoln is blazing new trails: The STEAM Hub is Rhode Island's first dedicated STEAM space for girls; Lincoln and the Sophia Academy established Rhode Island's only all-girl Hackathon; and Lincoln reports that it is the only school in the Providence market to discontinue the AP program in lieu of robust interdisciplinary learning.

She's a leader who has learned to accept praise – which is important to model for Lin-

coln students – as well as constructive criticism. When students began making bumper stickers for the Women's March that said, "The Future is Female," she received student feedback asserting that "The Future is Feminist" was a more-inclusive message. "It's a complicated world. People have different interpretations of 'female' and 'feminist.' I've always been a feminist ... this was a great piece of feedback that I learned from," she said.

The changes "have been amazing; she operates on a whole different plane," said Bank Rhode Island Senior Vice President – Team Leader Tim Coggins, treasurer of the Lincoln School board of trustees. He commended Fogarty for implementing institutional partnerships, reinvigorating the Lower School, raising \$5 million for the STEAM Hub and reversing the enrollment decline that predated her arrival, all within four years. Enrollment has increased 15 percent in three years, he added.

"It's amazing how quickly she acts," said Coggins, who had served on the board's finance committee before Fogarty's tenure. "When she sees something that needs to be done ... it moves from a good idea to completion in a rapid period of time."

Fogarty's leadership extends to board service, including at the Sophia Academy (where she co-chaired the 2017 search for the school's head), the Association of Independent Schools of New England and RISE Women's Leadership Conference Advisory Board.

Asked about her plans for Lincoln's future, Fogarty said she aims to: grow partnerships the school has established with RISD, Brown, Bryant University and Save The Bay; remain true to the school's mission of social justice, diversity, inclusion and understanding; and prepare students to deal with the world's complexities with humor, confidence and resilience. ■

Birthday party kits on demand

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer

BACK IN 2010, Stephanie Frazier Grimm enjoyed the incredible high of becoming a godparent, but she also felt fear and uncertainty as her godson was born eight weeks early.

"After my godson was born premature with a future of many disabilities," Grimm recalled, "I learned of a little boy who had spent his entire life in the hospital, and it was his birthday. His mother did not have the means to throw him a party, and the hospital provided the cake and gift but not the party decorations. I knew I had to change that."

And with that, **The Confetti Foundation** was born.

The Middletown-based non-profit provides a themed "birthday in a box" that hospitals can have on hand for a child's birthday. In addition to the boxes, the foundation can coordinate with hospital volunteers to put up decorations and provide gifts, cake and balloons to be brought into the child's

room.

For Grimm, who owns and operates a successful wedding and event-planning business called Couture Parties, The Confetti Foundation has a more personal meaning. She also spent a lot of time in the hospital – including her 13th birthday – being treated for kidney disease.

"I started this mission with all heart and need," Grimm said. "I changed the way birthdays were being celebrated in hospitals, with proper decorations and caregivers not having to worry about how they are going to produce a party."

While the foundation has celebrated more than 4,000 children in 170 hospitals to date, Grimm's ultimate goal is to have the program active in every children's hospital



CELEBRATION TIME: Stephanie Frazier Grimm is the founder of The Confetti Foundation, which provides ready-made birthday party kits so children in the hospital on their birthdays can easily celebrate the day with decorations.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

in the country. Just this year, the foundation added outpatient pediatric cancer clinics, which Grimm believes will have a huge impact on children facing chemotherapy treatments on their birthday.

For the past two years, Grimm has produced the "This is my FIGHT Celebration," a party for local children being treated for cancer at Hasbro Children's Hospital. Guests are treated as royalty, including donated dresses and tuxedos, accessories, dinner in a beautifully decorated ballroom, activities and raffle baskets. The

event is 100 percent donation-based and free for kids and their families.

"I get to create happy memories for families," Grimm said. ■

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Colleen Ramos, vice president of finance at Women & Infants Hospital, for being honored as part of the 2018 PBN Business Women Awards.

Colleen has been described as an expert in financial management; a mentor who loves to teach; a leader who gets the most out of her team while ensuring they continue to grow professionally; a respected and treasured asset. We believe she is all of that and more.



The faces you see inside a hospital only tell part of the story. The doctors, nurses, and other front line staff work hard taking care of patients and families during what are often the most difficult circumstances. What many of us don't see, are those whose job it is to keep the doors open, the lights on, and the storage closets fully stocked. Their motivation is making sure everyone else can focus on our collective mission to provide the highest quality, safest care possible. Colleen emulates this mission in all that she does.

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Culinary comforts create opportunity

BY WENDY PIERMAN MITZEL | Contributing Writer

OPPORTUNITY OFFERED: Connie Tang, center, president and CEO of direct-selling culinary product company Princess House, speaks with Jessica Viveiros, left, supervisor of sales administration, and Victoria Vilbrandt, vice president of marketing, strategy and solutions, at the company's Taunton office.

PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

CONNIE TANG, president and CEO of **Princess House Inc.**, leads a company that direct-sells upscale culinary products, but she says Princess House really offers opportunities.

“When you have an opportunity to give an individual who comes to you with the will to work and develop a business, you help them develop the skills that not only transforms their life but that of their children and family,” said Tang. “We have women who have barely a third-grade education level and yet have put children through college, bought homes, become inspiring speakers and mentors and developed their executive master’s in business by virtue of building a Princess House business.”

It’s that focus that led Princess House and its salesforce to grow from 1,000 independent consultants in 1969 to more than 25,000.

Focusing on the consultants selling the products is key, from offering incentives to intensifying training and increasing communication through social media, videos, stage presentations or intimate conversations.

“We needed to make sure we rewarded for business-building activities we wanted and communicated as such, so there would be no confusion, misinterpretation or conflicting programs,” she explained. “It’s amazing when your sales, marketing, training and incentives programs are aligned and provide clarity.”

As a result, Princess House has seen a 36 percent sales increase since Tang became president in 2012 and is now ranked No. 74 in the “Direct Selling News Global 100.”

Tang began her career in beauty companies such as Clinique and Lancome, then joined BeautiControl Inc., an international manufacturer and direct-selling company, where she eventually became vice president of special markets. Later, she moved to JAFRA Cosmetics International as president of the U.S. division in 2008.

Her multilingual capabilities are an asset to Princess House’s commitment to diversity.

‘I’m inspired by human triumph, when people rise up above impossible challenges.’

CONNIE TANG, Princess House Inc., president and CEO

In fact, the consumer and consultant base is nearly three-quarters Latino.

“While we did not initially start off with the intention of building a footprint in the Hispanic community, we have become very skilled at listening to our customers and sales field to inform our product developments, training

materials, and forums and service support,” Tang said.

Another important part of the business is the company commitment to philanthropy by supporting the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Operation Homefront, Grameen America and the United Way.

“She’s remarkable in that she has boundless energy and the commitment to match it,” said Norbert Brown, director of communications, Princess House. “She grew up in Brooklyn and everything she has is from hard work and dedication.”

So dedicated is Tang that she will enter the stage at a company event through a cloud of fog or swinging in on a harness. She has been known to join in the entertainment by singing along, says Brown.

“I grew up singing and playing musical instruments, so music and entertainment are a significant part of my leisure time,” Tang said.

Travel is a huge part of Tang’s job. Her husband and daughter live in Southern California, while Princess House is headquartered in Taunton. She lives in Providence.

“My husband humbles me and has been the critical pillar to my ability to pursue a career as he self-selected to be the stay-at-home dad,” Tang said. “My daughter inspires me because she is confident, hard-working, disciplined, caring and, I hope, as dedicated in my book, will always see ‘I’m possible.’”

Last year, Tang launched her book, “Fearless Living: 8 Life-Changing Values for Breakthrough Success,” as a way to “pay it forward and hopefully inspire those I’ve yet to meet by sharing some of my lessons learned, stories of other incredible women.

“I’m inspired by women who dream big,” she added. “I’m inspired by human triumph, when people rise up above impossible challenges. I’m inspired by challenges that may scare me and make me fight to be better, stronger, more agile and fearless.” ■

Belisle fosters healthy bonds

WENDY PIERMAN MITZEL | Contributing Writer

COMMUNITY RELATIONS is no longer an accessory to business strategy. It’s “a business imperative,” said Carolyn Belisle, managing director of community relations for **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island**.

The nonprofit health plan has always connected to the people of Rhode Island, she said, “but to an even greater extent today, consumers, employees, regulators and others want to engage with companies that support the communities where we live and work.”

Belisle has spent 17 years at the company, now leading the team to continuously find ways to partner with local programs and create philanthropic activities for the 1,000 people who work there.

“The #RecessRocksInRI initiative is one [project] I’m particularly proud of,” said Belisle. “The vision, the impact and the growth has been amazing to witness. Since 2015, 55 elementary schools and more than 21,000 children have benefited from the intervention

we’ve partnered on to improve outcomes and provide opportunity for children across the state to become more physically and socially healthy.”

Belisle also initiated “Blue Across Rhode Island” in 2012. More than 75 percent of the company’s workforce volunteered for activities such as assembling children’s nutrition bags, assisting in landscaping and painting projects, and supervising wellness screenings for the uninsured.

“I’m inspired by the generosity of my colleagues who we deploy every year on a large, powerful day of community service,” she said. “Since launching that effort, we’ve partnered with nearly 50 nonprofits across Rhode Island, generating nearly 22,000 volunteer hours,



LONGTIME LEADER: Carolyn Belisle, managing director of community relations for Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island in Providence, has been with the company for 17 years. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

and impacting the lives of nearly 100,000 Rhode Islanders. ... I’m also a deep believer and practitioner of collaboration and partnership. We can achieve so much more together than we ever could alone as individuals, so the work I lead at [Blue Cross] always starts from that place.”

“I can’t say enough about Carolyn’s warm, engaging personality, her keen intelligence, her visionary leadership and her ability to bring people together to make progress on a vitally important community goal,” said Elizabeth

Burke Bryant, executive director for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, a statewide organization supporting healthy children. “She is a person that people across the state want to work with and learn from.” ■

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Tuning up the housing engine

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer



HOUSING AROUND: Barbara Fields, executive director at R.I. Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp., has earned a reputation as a passionate proponent of affordable housing.
PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

WHILE BARBARA FIELDS may not remember the exact moment she decided what she wanted to do for a living, she says she knows it happened while she was doing it.

Throughout her nearly 30-year career spanning roles with the Local Initiatives Support Corp., the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and now as executive director at **R.I. Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp.**, Fields has believed in herself and her ability to make an impact in others' lives – a big impact.

"I grew up at a time when there was enough exposure to the idea that women could be talented," Fields said. "That was something my girlfriends and I all believed: that women could run things. Could accomplish things. Women could be leaders. At MIT, where I earned my masters, I met innovative, creative, forward-thinking women who were going to change the world."

Fields joined R.I. Housing, a Providence-based, quasi-public corporation that provides mortgages and finances the construction of housing for Rhode Islanders, three years ago. The 45-year-old organization has helped more than 70,000 Rhode Islanders purchase homes and has financed the construction of more than 14,000 apartments.

"R.I. Housing invests in Rhode Islanders," Fields said. "Economic development, workforce, equity and housing issues are all interconnected. The truth is, you can't really have long-lasting success in one area without investment and success in the others. R.I. Housing is an integral part of moving Rhode Island forward. We create housing. We create jobs. And we create opportunity."

Over the past few years, Fields has focused on several areas in an effort to improve how R.I. Housing does business, the most pressing of which has been identifying and updating sorely outdated information technology systems.

"One of my favorite things about our staff is that we've got this great mix of people who

'R.I. Housing is an integral part of moving Rhode Island forward.
... **We create opportunity.**'

BARBARA FIELDS,
R.I. Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp., executive director

have been here 10 years or longer and are mid-career and then we've got this great group of new people who are just starting out," Fields said. "The corporation benefits from having experience and institutional knowledge but all of that is balanced by new ideas, new approaches and new ways of seeing the world with our younger staff. I've made sure that we work really hard to recruit new employees from all kinds of backgrounds and experiences, that we work to make those people feel appreciated and valued, and that we listen to the ideas that they

bring into the corporation."

Christine Hunsinger, assistant deputy director for policy and research at R.I. Housing, says her strong interest in the corporation developed from the passion that Fields displays in her work.

"I've known Barbara for about two years," Hunsinger said. "When I first met her, every conversation we had was about housing and community and neighborhoods. She would describe how the investments of R.I. Housing and their partners have really changed lives and provided real opportunities. She was so engaging on the subject that I finally asked her to take me on a tour of some neighborhoods and to physically show me what she had been describing. After that I was hooked, and when an opportunity to work full time at R.I. Housing opened up, I took it. ... She's always driving us to do more and pushing us to think differently about how to solve problems or overcome obstacles."

For Fields, the perspective she has gained over the years is what makes all the difference.

"Going into the neighborhoods where I started working 25 years ago and seeing real progress" is gratifying, she said. "People who have grown their businesses. People who've become homeowners. Young people becoming engaged in their community. A park reclaimed from a contaminated site. Safe streets. A local school with a garden built by the kids. Bike paths. A community health center. All amazing pieces in the puzzle that makes community," she said. ■

Making the grade for the kids

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

MARGARET TELLER is president and CEO of **The Children's Workshop**, a Cumberland-based child care and learning center with 19 locations throughout Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

But for Teller, leading a child care company was not the plan. She'd earned an undergraduate degree in economics, then an MBA. For a time, she worked in real estate development.

Her father, Dave McDonald, founded The Children's Workshop in 1990. It was originally to provide employees of his mortgage company with a needed benefit: child care. The effort became an in-demand business in its own right, and McDonald was growing the company.

"He hooked me with the build-new-schools side of it," laughed Teller, who has worked for her father since 2006.

Build new schools they did. Now McDonald sits on the company's board of directors. Teller

heads up the business side of The Children's Workshop, and her sister Bailey Kent shares in the company ownership. "We also call her the CEO, chief education officer," said Teller, adding that Kent's education background is the other piece of the company's success.

Since Teller took the reins in 2014, the school has seen enrollment grow 20 percent, revenue 30 percent. The schools use play as a learning tool, keeping kids engaged and exploring their own interests. There are now roughly 2,000 students at The Children's Workshop locations. A new school was just acquired in Raynham, Mass., and more are coming, said Teller.

"I try to visit on a regular basis, talk to employees and understand their pain points, and be as hands-on as I can," she said.

Teller's impact is felt far beyond the walls of the schools.

The Children's Workshop Foundation, a 501(c)3 that Teller started



ACING CHILD CARE: Margaret Teller, president and CEO of The Children's Workshop, strives to maintain high learning and child care standards while advocating for increased support for working families' child care needs. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

in 2011, has a school in Pawtucket, offering affordable rates, scholarships and mentoring in tandem with Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership. All school profits go back into the community.

A Rhode Island Early Learning Council member and leader in the Rhode Island Campaign for Quality Child Care, she can also be found testifying before the state's General Assembly on issues such as increasing Child Care Assistance Program rates to ensure par-

ents can afford high-quality care and teachers are paid fairly.

"We want to help people on a larger scale," said Teller. ■

Bold Minds Begin at Lincoln



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Engineer bridging success by design

BY MICHAEL J. DECICCO | Contributing Writer

PROVIDENCE COMMUTERS see the handiwork of Patricia Steere, engineer and CEO at **Steere Engineering Inc.**, every day.

Steere managed the design and engineering of the massive \$600 million Interstate 195 relocation project completed in 2010 known as the I-Way.

She successfully managed the project, which included 15 new bridges, 61 new heavy-traffic-bearing walls and 15 contractors. She also provided technical oversight of 15 engineers, coordinating with the R.I. Department of Transportation.

And she also designed what is arguably its most unique feature, the 1,200-by-400-foot wide, seven-span network-arch Providence River Bridge.

Rebecca Iwanczuk, office manager at Steere Engineering, said the structure is the first network-arch bridge erected in the United States.

The achievement is only a part of what Iwanczuk admires about Steere. After completing the I-Way project in 2010, Steere founded Steere Engineering.

"It has grown from only one employee, herself, to 31 employees over seven years, and she hopes it will continue to grow into a full-service transportation-engineering firm," Iwanczuk said. "She's a leader. She has the proven skills to manage several ongoing projects all at once successfully. She takes the initiative. It's taken a lot of dedication to get where she is today."

Iwanczuk has known Steere for 10 years. They worked together at CDR McQuinn for five years during the I-Way project, then worked another five years together at Steere Engineering.

"She's earned the respect of her peers, her co-workers and employees," Iwanczuk said. "She is a model for every woman who works with her or for her. She has inspired me, taught me a lot. My image of her is as a teacher. That image of what she's accomplished is powerful. If she can do it, I can do it."

"I've always enjoyed engineering. It's very rewarding to see something you worked on designing and engineering with other people all

'This company has done well. I take pride in that.'

**PATRICIA STEERE,
Steere Engineering Inc.,
founder and CEO**

fall into place and become reality," Steere said.

Her father was a structural engineer. "But in my childhood, women didn't consider engineering as a career. In high school, due to the women's liberation movement, engineering became an option. I was good at math, and my father encouraged me to try engineering. I tried it with the attitude that I wouldn't like it and would switch out later. I loved it and stuck with it."

The initiative led her on a career spanning beyond bridge design to inspection and ratings, and bridge-construction support services in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut, and building design, including power plants, wastewater-treatment structures and composting facilities.

Steere earned her master's degree in civil engineering at the University of Delaware in

DESIGNS ON SUCCESS: Patricia Steere, center, founder and CEO of Steere Engineering, has enjoyed a career as a literal bridge builder, pioneering the first network-arch bridge erected in the United States. She is pictured with structural engineers Nicole Richard and Peter Gagnon.

PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

1981. She has spent 32 years in bridge and building design, construction and inspection work in the region, working on projects that included continuous span bridges, 3-D modeling for a test facility building at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Newport and analyses that repaired deficiencies at the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Station in Somervell County, Texas, and the Millstone III Nuclear Power Station in Waterford, Conn.

Steere said being a woman in a male-dominated field hasn't been a problem for her.

"There are disadvantages and advantages," she said. "It didn't distract me when there could have been a subtle slight. It's satisfying to rise to management level. This company has done well. I take pride in that."

The northern Delaware native said she gives young women looking to succeed in business, especially in her line of expertise, a simple piece of advice she's found valuable.

"I tell them have confidence in yourself," Steere said. "Don't be afraid to try new things or stretch outside of your comfort zone. Also, do what you enjoy and challenge yourself in that profession." ■

Darmetko leads online remake

BY MICHAEL J. DECICCO | Contributing Writer

ERIN DARMETKO, information services officer at **Amica Mutual Insurance Co.**, has successfully combined technical expertise and interpersonal leadership skills in many company projects, including upgrading the company's web presence so customers enjoy modern service from the oldest mutual insurer of automobiles in the country.

Darmetko is valued because she can combine technical expertise and interpersonal leadership, said Amica Insurance Vice President Darlene Major.

"She is able to strike the right balance between leader and technical expert, which is vital to the success of our department," Major said. "She's an out-of-the-box strategic thinker, challenging the status quo."

The department has benefited from the many employee engagement efforts Darmetko spearheaded, efforts her co-workers have noted. She's been recognized twice with leadership excellence awards by Amica's CIS Management

Team, Major said.

Since starting with Amica as a system analyst six years ago, Major said, Darmetko has been responsible for oversight of 17 project managers and instrumental in developing Amica's Cross Divisional Leadership group, which has prioritized and created the company's information technology project data portfolios. Darmetko also implemented the Agile project-management system, which inputs and releases data quicker in small increments, rather than one step at a time, Major said, improving the customer experience.

Darmetko, a Warwick native, said she considers one of her

strengths the ability to assemble the best team. She said her biggest accomplishments have been adding value to what Amica offers with new insurance features and improving the Amica.com website to make it more customer-friendly. The website can now change format whether a customer is accessing it on a mobile telephone or a laptop computer. She is proud to note this project started development in January 2017, and launched in July 2017.

"We've made customers happier with the services they're getting," she said. "We've streamlined their online experience, added value to

ON TOP OF TECH: From left, Jonathan Brackens, project manager, corporate information systems at Amica Mutual Insurance Co.; Erin Darmetko, information services officer; and Darlene Major, vice president of corporate information systems, discuss upcoming projects at the company's Lincoln office. PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

the services we offer. We've listened to a lot of customer feedback. It has been tremendously positive. People in this company believe in it and feel we are all on the same team." ■



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Medicine delivery a sweet success

BY JAMES BAAR | Contributing Writer

CHRISTINA PROCACCIANTI'S independent apothecary and soda fountain in South Kingstown provides her clients with a package hard to find elsewhere: expertly filled medical prescriptions, natural medicines and soda jerk-served, all-natural drinks and ice cream.

Moreover, **Green Line Apothecary** will deliver your medical prescriptions free of charge in the pharmacy's restored 1949 Chevrolet panel van.

The business celebrated its first anniversary with a gala celebration on May 19 in its parking lot. A happy crowd jammed the lot to watch a free movie, the 1978 classic musical "Grease," eat free popcorn and sample Green Line's latest "limited-edition, natural ice cream," cookies and cream.

Procaccianti, born in New Jersey, said she first "fell in love with independent pharmacies" as a young girl helping her father in his greeting card business by arranging and changing greeting

cards on pharmacy racks.

"I always wanted to be a pharmacist like that," she said.

Her initial major step in that direction was graduating from Northeastern University in Boston in 2007 with a six-year doctor of pharmacy degree.

Procaccianti became the mother of three children while practicing her professional career at Walmart in Lynn, Mass., and Mass General Hospital in Boston; later when she became a pharmacist, in Mystic, Conn., at McQuade's, one of a small chain of grocery-pharmacies, the Procacciantis moved to South Kingstown.

Then last year, Procaccianti opened her independent pharmacy and soda fountain on Wakefield village's Main Street – a few blocks away from three giant competitors, CVS Health Corp., Rite Aid and Walgreens.

"I felt it was a good place to return to the classic American drugstore and that's what I have



MODERN CLASSIC: Pharmacist Christina Procaccianti, right, operates a modern version of a classic American drugstore. Green Line Apothecary is on Main Street in South Kingstown. Above, she talks with Laura Taylor of Exeter at the drop-off counter.

PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

created," she said. "Our pharmacy matches any other big-chain pharmacy in its ability to fill prescriptions, and costs no more. But we also feature an authentic, antique soda fountain that offers the 19th-century and early 20th-century classic sodas that soda jerks once served to cover the bad taste of medicine.

"What we don't serve," Procaccianti noted, "are contemporary, chemical additives such as high fructose corn syrup and aspartame."

In its first 12 months, Procaccianti said Green Line has gone from "no revenue to profitability and expects continuing growth in its second year."

Initially, she has been the only full-time employee, supported by part-timers. Now she plans to add a pharmacy assistant and what used to be called a soda jerk.

Procaccianti said her "personal objective is to make a positive contribution to our clients' health and welfare.

"I want to be the community pharmacist here," she said. ■

Inspiring growth through music

BY ELIZABETH LEE | Contributing Writer

A SUCCESSFUL CONDUCTOR will inspire her musicians to give the audience their best possible artistic performance – those sweeping crescendos and hushed pianissimos that bring tears to people's eyes. Effectively dynamic and emotive performances often rely on the rise and fall of a conductor's baton. In fact, conducting is an art form in and of itself – just ask Christine Noel, artistic director for both the **Rhode Island Children's Chorus** and the Providence Singers.

Noel has more than two decades of experience behind the podium. She started out as a music-education student at Rhode Island College and the Kodály Institute of Music in Kecskemét, Hungary. She continued her studies and practice at Boston University (from which she holds a doctorate of musical arts), and spent time living abroad in Italy, where she worked as a vocal coach and conductor for choirs at the University of Florence. When she finally returned to her home state in 2003, she says,

something was missing.

"By the time I got back to Rhode Island, I was really missing that opportunity to connect with young people." So began the Rhode Island Children's Chorus, which she co-founded with Executive Director Joyce Wolfe that same year.

They've performed on a Grammy-nominated album, opened for the Rockettes, had a cameo in Wes Andersen's 2012 film "Moonrise Kingdom," and performed the national anthem for the Harlem Globetrotters.

But the rewards don't come without work. For a conductor, that involves a mixture of rehearsals, meetings, studying musical scores and rehearsal planning. According to Noel, there's a lot of solitary preparation.

"In a typical week, I'll spend hours sitting with orchestral scores, marking the music with interpretations that I want to elicit from the musicians, sculpting in my mind what the piece is going to be like at the performance, and



RECONNECTING: Christine Noel co-founded the Rhode Island Children's Chorus because she missed the "opportunity to connect with young people" while working abroad at the University of Florence in Italy, where she lived for nearly two years.

PBN FILE PHOTO/TRACY JENKINS

then figuring out all of the steps that need to be taken to get there," she said. "It's a lot of learning, a lot of studying and a good deal of strategizing."

All that hard work paid off for Noel in 2013 when she was named the new artistic director for the Providence Singers, a chorus for which she'd been an assistant conductor since 2004.

"My vision is to focus on high-level musical and vocal training, of course that's a goal," she said. "But equally important to me, and has been from the beginning, is developing children's self-esteem and empowering them from those earliest years."

Noel says that she often receives

letters from graduating seniors reflecting on their experience in the chorus, and a common theme is the self-confidence they've developed. "I'm a serious musician – I take myself seriously in terms of my music," said Noel. "But it just never gets much better than hearing someone tell you their life has been changed because of the work that you do." ■

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Gloves soothing painful struggles

BY KYLE BOROWSKI | Contributing Writer

UNTIL RECENTLY, Marita Loffredo didn't think of herself as a businesswoman, "but necessity is the mother of invention," she said.

With late-stage rheumatoid arthritis, the West Warwick resident struggled for years to find gloves for hands contorted by the inflammatory disease. Having sensitive joints, putting on gloves could be a chore in itself, not to mention trying to complete any task with them on made her feel like she was operating with "clown shoes" for hands.

Arthritics and those affected by similar maladies, such as Raynaud's phenomenon, have a unique need for efficient hand covering, Loffredo explained, as even slight changes in temperature can trigger painful spasms or numbness.

Loffredo would take gloves to the supermarket, for instance, as the coldness of the refrigerated section could trigger an attack in her hands.

Even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

estimates that about 54.4 million Americans have some form of arthritis, Loffredo found it difficult, even online, to locate resources for a problem countless Americans share.

Loffredo had been thinking fancifully about making a pair of mittens for herself when her hand surgeon gave her the push she needed. "He said it was the No. 1 complaint, 'there's nothing out there, go for it.'" Loffredo said.

It would take Loffredo 10 years to translate her idea into a marketable product: Phalang-Ease mittens.

Instead of sliding a hand in – a potentially painful and laborious effort for those with arthritic conditions – the gloves have a flap on the bottom that allows users or caregivers easy access.

The high-quality fleece is 100 percent windproof and water resistant, while the elastic is strong enough to keep out wind but not too tight that it agitates the wrist.

"It's a universal design, so you



SOFT SELL: Marita Loffredo, founder of Phalang-Ease Mittens, came up with the idea for the gloves due to her own challenges with rheumatoid arthritis. PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

don't have to have handicapped hands to wear them," Loffredo said.

The precariousness of her condition, especially considering the launch in 2014 of **Phalang-Ease Mittens LLC**, led Loffredo to transfer ownership of the company to her sons Peter and Michael, though she still helps with events and marketing.

This past winter was the first selling season. Loffredo estimates that she sold or comped about 60 pairs from an initial order of 188 from the manufacturer. They sell for \$37.50 a pair.

Though she never trained in business, Loffredo has an instinc-

tual acumen and attention to detail that have helped her transition to the commercial world. Instead of occupying herself with the thought of profits and dividends, though, Loffredo says she considers the impact her gloves have on others to be most important.

"If I can help somebody feel better in cold weather, that would be wonderful," Loffredo said. "I've tried to keep costs low because I want everybody who needs them to be able to afford them and have some comfort." ■

Boat interiors are Maloney's canvas

BY KYLE BOROWSKI | Contributing Writer

IN MANY WAYS, Ally Maloney's job is like that of any other interior designer: selecting furniture, finishes, cushions and upholstery work. The biggest difference, of course, is the focus of her work can sail off when her contract ends.

Since 2013, Maloney has designed interiors for yachts and some coastal residences with her business, **Maloney Interiors LLC**. For her work, Maloney has traveled as far south as New Jersey and north to Maine to consult over the interior of her customers' boats. Maloney has also worked in Rhode Island on boats from the West Coast and around the world.

Maloney doesn't know exactly when her passion for yacht design began but attributes some original interest to childhood summers spent in southern Florida, admiring yachts on the Intracoastal Waterway. By the time she attended college, her fascination with both yachting and design had grown

markedly.

Maloney obtained a bachelor's degree in interior design from Wentworth Institute of Technology and a certificate in yacht and boat design from Westlawn Institute of Marine Technology. While at Wentworth, Maloney participated in a co-op program that would see her working alongside watercraft architects, first as an intern and then as a full-time employee after graduation.

When that job ran its course, Maloney set out on her own, founding an eponymous design firm that catered to yacht owners in and out of Rhode Island.

Yachts, Maloney explained, offer designers a sizable workload. Because most interior facets of a boat are built to unique specifications, nearly every aspect requires custom-ordered accoutrements. Curtains, bedding, cushions, carpeting; all typically acquirable en masse, must be measured, ordered and planned by Maloney. All mate-



STEADY GROWTH: Ally Maloney, owner of Maloney Interiors, has been designing interiors for yachts and some coastal residences since 2013. She says her business has grown steadily over the past four years. PBN FILE PHOTO/KATE WHITNEY LUCEY

rials ordered for specific projects, Maloney said, are manufactured in Rhode Island.

Maloney Interiors is a one-woman show. She consults with and designs for clients. She remains active on projects to ensure her vision remains intact.

The personal attention and involvement of a one-designer firm, often over several months, doesn't come cheap. She charges up to \$25,000 per project, Maloney estimated. Maloney's clientele has been built over time, with early customers stemming from contacts made during her employment with watercraft architects. She also gets referrals from yacht brokers,

project managers or shipyard and marina directors. Additionally, events such as the Newport Boat Show offer Maloney the opportunity to meet with potential clients and showcase her work.

Maloney said it's impossible to pin down her own personal sense of style but said she operates under some guiding principles when designing yachts.

"The interior of the boat has to be somewhat relative to the overall aesthetic," Maloney said. "You have to consider the ... architecture, the lines of the boat, the exterior styling." ■

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A passion for art education

BY PAUL E. KANDARIAN | Contributing Writer

WHEN NORAH DIEDRICH was 8 or 9 years old, growing up outside Chicago, she would entertain herself at home by engaging in a favorite activity – drawing.

“Then I remember finding out that the Art Institute of Chicago had this wonderful youth program on Saturday mornings, downstairs in its education center,” Diedrich said. “I went, and I think that early engagement definitely attributed to a lifelong love of making art and a career in the arts.”

That career, part of which included teaching and exhibiting fine arts photography, led to her current position as executive director of the nonprofit **Newport Art Museum**, where she’s been since April 2015, coming from the same position at the Evanston Art Center in Illinois. Owing perhaps to encouragement by parents, teachers and friends to pursue her artistic leanings as a child, one of the most important components of Diedrich’s Newport job is engaging young people in the arts.

“Education is a critical part of

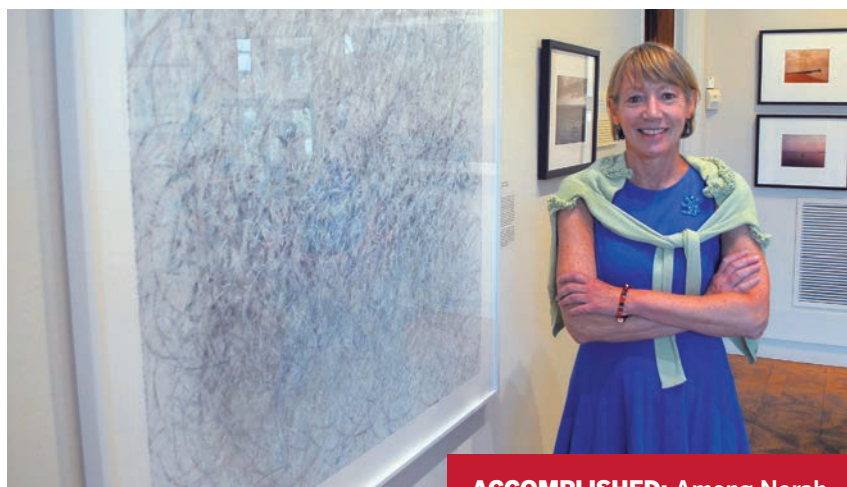
what we do, and has been since the early mission of the Art Association of Newport in 1912” that evolved into the museum, she said. “We’re open year-round, with classes and camps and workshops for all ages in a variety of mediums.”

There are close to 1,500 participants in the programs, for which some earn scholarships. The museum also does significant educational outreach throughout the state, Diedrich said.

The museum, located on Bellevue Avenue near the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, is an easy walk from the city’s popular waterfront.

“Our visitor numbers are [about] 18,000 a year, and membership is just under 1,300,” she said. “We have new initiatives on raising memberships and it’s safe to say we’ll make some changes to work on getting new members. For one thing, we want to start corporate memberships, which we haven’t done before.”

“We’d love for people to stay



ACCOMPLISHED: Among Norah Diedrich’s many accomplishments as executive director of the Newport Art Museum are creating a new position of director of community engagement and implementing two successful programs, “Art After Dark” and “Second Saturdays,” since joining the museum in April 2015.

PBN FILE PHOTO/PAUL E. KANDARIAN

here longer,” she said. “That [depends on] how many people in a tourist community want to spend a couple of hours, viewing the exhibits, having coffee, browsing a catalogue and visiting the shop. That’s one thing we are looking at.”

Changes she’s enacted include creating a new position of director of community engagement, and instituting two successful programs. “Art After Dark” is held the second Thursday of each month to draw people to the museum in the evening. “Second Saturdays” is held on the second Saturday of the month for family-oriented programming.

The museum is contained in three buildings on 3 acres situated on “one of the most beautiful

streets in Newport,” Diedrich said. “Our green space is opportunity. We have a plan to call this the arts campus, and are working with landscape architects and the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, which has helped us to develop a master plan. Then our public engagement would expand exponentially.” ■

Cola fuels LISC’s early impact

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

CAREER CHANGERS ARE common in today’s workforce. Those switching industries bring broad perspectives and fresh skill sets to new fields but can make the modern-day corporate ladder look more like a winding road at times.

But Jeanne Cola is lucky enough to have found her lifelong career at her very first job, at Citizens Bank. She started work there as a student, was exposed to all areas of banking through training and stayed for 25 years, learning how to create mortgage products for clients with low incomes along the way.

“I only left [because] the opportunity with LISC [Rhode Island Local Initiatives Support Corp.] would allow me more influence,” said Cola, who has been executive director of the organization, which helps get affordable housing and other projects off the ground within the state’s most-distressed neighborhoods, for six years. “It was about moving into corporate banking, only from a community perspective. I could be deeply en-

gaged in change for residents and create opportunities to make their lives better.”

A community-development financial institution, LISC opened its Rhode Island office in 1991. Its goal is to build healthy neighborhoods by linking local leaders and organizations with resources to improve the quality of life. With a national corporation behind it, LISC Rhode Island is able to open up access to resources residents wouldn’t otherwise have – including public and private funding in the form of loans, grants and equity investments – for local projects.

“Those first dollars that come in allow millions to flow in after,” said Cola. “That is what really influences that change. That’s where, in my opinion, you see the real influence of LISC due to its impact in the early stages, with early investments. But we have to operate in a fiscally responsible way to have more dollars to lend out.”

Beautiful Beginnings Child



DEEPLY ENGAGED: Jeanne Cola uses her experience and the skills she learned working at Citizens Bank for 25 years in her current role as executive director of LISC Rhode Island, an organization that helps get affordable housing and other projects off the ground within the state’s most-distressed neighborhoods.

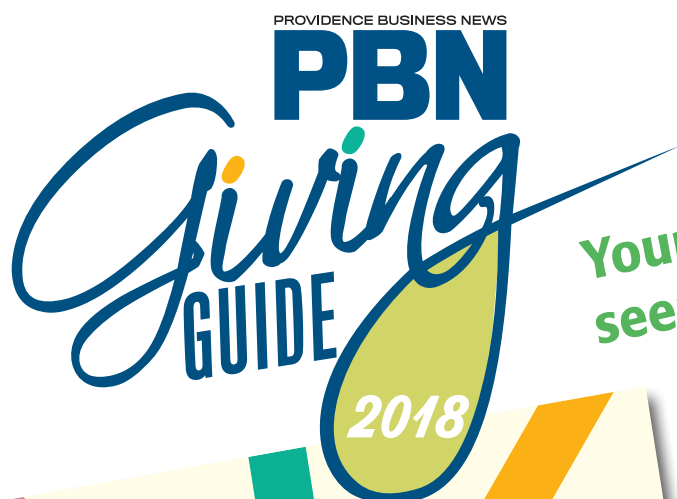
PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

Care Center, in Providence, which serves households with low incomes, is an LISC project. Cola’s group first assisted in making the space appropriate for child care with its Child Care Facilities Fund, adding in grant money, a loan to refinance the state-licensed facility’s mortgage at a lower rate, assisted in a renovation for program expansion and refinancing with more-favorable terms. According to its website, LISC has invested more than \$850,000 at Beautiful Beginnings, which serves more than 100 children and their families with Early Head Start and other learning initiatives.

“Our goal is to provide what

they need where a bank might not be able to,” said Cola. “So, we can be a catalytic influence.”

“If there is a project that will advance the LISC mission, then Jeanne will move mountains to get it done,” said Joseph Silva, senior vice president of commercial lending at Pawtucket Credit Union and chair of the LISC Local Advisory Committee. ■



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Messier is driven to aid nonprofits

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

A RHODE ISLAND INNOVATION STORY may not get more home-grown than Katherine Messier's. But the impact of her work resonates with nonprofits in every single state in the union, and beyond.

Born and raised in Rhode Island, she is executive director of **Mobile Beacon** – a company she founded in 2007 that provides broadband service to nonprofits at an affordable rate – and a second-generation entrepreneur.

The daughter of John Primeau, founder and CEO of North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation Inc. of Johnston – the second-largest educational broadband-service licensee in the U.S. – Messier did not have time to follow exactly in her father's footsteps. She was busy working, exploring and making her own entrepreneurial path.

And work she did. Where most finish college and head to work, Messier could not wait. Workplace experience from co-op programs was a large part of her learning

process, she said, and a significant priority when choosing a school.

So, choosing Merrimack College in Massachusetts for her undergraduate degree was based in part on its co-op program. Messier worked full time for pay while completing her business-administration degree, which she still knocked out in four years, doing some coursework nights and during the summers. For graduate school, she took part in another co-op program at Emerson College in Boston, earning a degree in integrated marketing and communications.

For Messier, it was on a visit to Boulder, Colo., to an NACEPF partner company called Clearwire that sparked the idea for Mobile Beacon. Clearwire had a similar business model. She headed back to New England motivated and inspired to go about building a startup. Everything began coming together.

"I understood the potential and took that leap, knowing we can figure it out," she said. "I had



HOT SPOT: Mobile Beacon staffers, from left, Rick Lindholm, sales manager; Cristina Graham, program director; and Katherine Messier, founder and executive director, speak with Kate Aubin at the Providence Public Library about the broadband-service provider's 4G mobile hotspot devices, which people can check out from the library – the first and now largest such program in the country.

PBN FILE PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

grown up with this kind of vision all along, there was no one more invested and passionate." Her memories of working at the Boston homeless children's facility in her head, she worked to bridge the digital divide to better link nonprofits with the needy and with each other.

Mobile Beacon's mission is to connect charity groups, schools, libraries and other community organizations who otherwise may not be able to afford high-speed broadband with low-cost, mobile 4G LTE internet.

Mobile Beacon allows Messier to use her business acumen and passion for nonprofits, using a strong existing foundation as a

parent company, NACEPF, to bring new services to market to a population in need. "I love working in business and solving problems. I was able to tie it back to social good ... bringing those passions together," she said. ■

TTG spinoff makes analytic apps

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

THERE ARE COMPANIES that start in smaller, some may say less-glamorous, states such as Rhode Island, grow and move on to the Big Apple – and then there is digital-marketing company **Technology Therapy Group LLC**, led by Jennifer Shaheen, which did the reverse.

The business began in New York City when Shaheen, founder and president, was in college, and now is growing in the Ocean State with a bigger staff and even bigger ideas.

With 83 percent revenue growth from 2014 to 2016, TTG made the Providence Business News' 2017 list of Fastest Growing & Innovative Companies in Rhode Island. And it has done nothing but grow, recently moving from its North Providence location to new digs in Lincoln, adding team members and a new company, the mission of which Shaheen called "where we are headed."

Her success started with education she got in and out of school. Shaheen started the first TTG of-

fice in Long Island, N.Y., while she attended Hofstra University, focusing on studies in business, marketing and computers. She also sold computers at Circuit City.

Her company moved to Manhattan, N.Y., and then White Plains, N.Y. Her client base grew past New York, then across the United States, then across the globe. Shaheen also offered software trainings and became known as a national tech speaker. Her speaking engagements, she said, set her apart and were hugely valuable in getting clients.

It's just in the past few years or so that her roster of clients has started forming in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Shaheen observed a distinct lack of certain digital-marketing tools in her industry in recent years, especially in terms of analytics.

She was frustrated separating data to get the information she wanted from the use of a website, specifically information about



NEW DIGS: Jennifer Shaheen, founder and president of Technology Therapy Group, began the company in New York but has opened a new location in Lincoln and added team members. From left, Tom DiGrazia (standing), creative director; Tyler Smith, software engineer; Shaheen; Courtney Dumont, digital strategist; and Zack Cote, software engineer.

PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

why the user came to the website and what information they sought. She saw an opportunity.

"We should build our own," she remembered thinking.

An innovation-development project began.

TTG's physical move to Lincoln, then, was the mere tip of the iceberg for changes at the company. A rebranding will change the name.

Shaheen is launching a second company, kepler12, out of the Rhode Island location. The new company will build the proprietary software apps her digital-marketing agency sought to provide to its website clients but couldn't find.

The goal is to have websites learn from visitors, said Shaheen, and for business owners to be able to learn from that information and make decisions accordingly.

"It will then suggest content changes built on those analytics ... we will be able to target women in certain age groups, for instance, see how different people respond to different headlines and images," she said. ■

Designer renews fashion following

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

ELANA CARELLO of **Elana Carello Sweaters** – a Cranston designer who came back to the Ocean State from New York City about 10 years ago – is tweaking a winning formula.

The foundation of her success? Her experience – designing whimsical knit sweaters and sweater vests, but this time with a new, strategic approach to reinvent her company in a tough industry, infusing it with new life.

She always loved fashion.

Her mother taught her to sew, and sewing was taught in home-economics classes in school, offering Carello a better understanding on form and function.

“I’m very lucky,” Carello said. Her parents, a Cranston police major and a bookkeeper, had no familiarity with the world of fashion but were early supporters of her desire to get into the design field. “We would drive by RISD [Rhode Island School of Design] and they’d say, ‘You’ll go there one day.’”

She did, graduating in the 1980s with a bachelor’s degree in apparel

design.

Carello found a mentor in a designer named Michael Seroy, who had his knit fashions in major magazines such as Vogue and Elle. She worked as his assistant, prepping for her initial hire-interview with him “like you wouldn’t believe,” she said. After the interview, she called every day.

After Seroy passed away in 1992, Carello sought to fill a void.

“Michael left a hole in the industry,” in terms of knits. “I had designed a lot of it with him and I wanted to continue.”

One day, Carello was told by an employer to cancel a photo shoot for a collection of sweaters she loved; they hadn’t made it into a line. Instead, Carello asked if the photographer would take a credit card and went about promoting the collection.

By the 1990s, Elana Carello Sweaters were sold at retailers such as Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Saks and Black Market. Carello called it a “quick and immediate success.”



NEW DESIGNS: Elana Carello, owner of Elana Carello Sweaters, sketches new designs. She has found success in pop-up shops and artisan shows and has seen her sales grow.

PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

The sweaters were featured on shows such as “The Nanny,” “Oprah,” “Live! With Regis and Kathie Lee” (and more recently worn by Mindy Kaling, star of “The Mindy Project,” first aired on Fox), to name just a few.

Carello had her first child by then and was ready for a break. She took some time to raise her two daughters, who are now teenagers.

Now back in Rhode Island, Carello has created design classes for RISD Continuing Education, taught classes at Mount Ida College in Newton, Mass., and has created design summer camps and workshops.

A RISD alumni show in 2016

was a way Carello thought she could clear some sweaters out of inventory. Instead, the event sparked a whole new business structure.

“It shocked me; we did so well,” she said.

Previously manufactured in China, Carello’s sweaters are now made in the U.S. She’s found success in pop-up shops and artisan shows, such as the one at RISD, and has seen her numbers double from 2016 to 2017 as a result. ■

Nurturing South County startups

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

TUNI SCHATNER is an energetic facilitator and unapologetic cheerleader in growing the state’s economy, especially in southern Rhode Island, where she lives and works.

Having branded herself “Rhode Island’s economic gardener,” the moniker resonates, she said, as it is both figurative and literal.

“I do my part to grow the Rhode Island economy,” she said, hyper-focusing on small businesses – work that has earned her local and state accolades.

But if businesses need actual gardening advice? She also happens to be a landscape enthusiast, able to offer opinions on plantings and bushes for the exterior of an office building, for example. Whatever it takes to help small businesses, she says.

It’s this kind of wide-open perspective on her strengths and the strengths of others that has helped Schartner serve entrepreneurs and startup business clients of her North Kingstown marketing firm,

TS Consulting/TRS Strategies. It’s just one of her many roles: Schartner is chief marketing officer at North Kingstown’s The Mill at Lafayette, as well as director of The Hive co-working space in the mill – the first such space in southern Rhode Island – which she founded with mill owner Mike Baker and Larry Zevon of Zevon Media LLC.

In helping to create The Hive about five years ago, Schartner had to research, gather information and pivot from an original plan.

At the time, she was working individually out of a coffeehouse, as was Zevon. It was not always a conducive setup for things such as conference calls, she said.

Ultimately, the idea of a business incubator morphed into a co-working space proposal.

“We are southern Rhode Island,” said Schartner. “It’s different down here; it’s not downtown Providence. For an incubator, we were not ready, but we did need a co-working space ... it was the



MANY ROLES: Tuni Schartner, owner of TS Consulting, chief marketing officer of The Mill at Lafayette and director of The Hive co-working space, still finds time with her dog Homer.

PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

perfect alternative: space to work alone, together.”

Schartner helps small businesses – generally those with under 50 employees – grow from the inside out but also from the outside in, peeling back the layers of who their customers are. Variants are very individualized for small businesses.

“It’s about the audience you’re trying to reach, how they like to receive communications. Now more than ever, people are paying attention to that; they are bombarded with messaging,” she said, whether via text, social media, television or other content channels. “It’s more and more important ... the

human side of business.”

Ultimately, Schartner says, being aware of change and able to be agile, banding together, using small-business resources, maximizing educational opportunities and knowing one’s customer base will position small businesses for growth, and grow the Rhode Island economy even more.

“Business owners can absolutely empower themselves,” she said. ■

Aesthetician clears career success

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

LICENSED AESTHETICIAN

Michelle Maynard, owner of **360 Face Mind Body** in Coventry, at first pushed aside the suggestion that she enter the international skin-care competition Skin Games.

It involved videotaping her work on a client over a course of eight weeks. Aestheticians from around the world compete to be finalists, and then go on to the main competition and awards ceremony in California.

But Dasha Saian, CEO of Saian Natural Clinical – a plant-based skin-care line Maynard carries, was encouraging. She told Maynard she should get out of her comfort zone. Her company offered to sponsor Maynard in the contest, providing her with products, the pure, minimal-ingredient natural ones Maynard used on clients and with which she was already familiar.

As it worked out, there was a holistic category in the competition. It suited 360 Face Mind Body well.

The wellness spa offers organic

products and treatments for clients with skin issues such as acne, signs of aging, or who just want a relaxing facial treatment. In the competition video submission, she was allowed to use technological tools of the trade, just as she does at her spa, such as an ultrasonic skin spatula for cell metabolism, infrared technologies for acne and micro-phototherapy LHE (light, heat and energy) for anti-aging treatments.

With years as an aesthetician, Maynard had mastered these devices. But the video portion of this contest submission was different.

She had to teach herself how to use a video camera; it wasn't easy. With materials needing to be in before Jan. 1, Maynard submitted her video Dec. 27.

It was Feb. 1 when she got an email letting her know she was a finalist in her category.

Years ago – before she began helping people ensure great skin health – Maynard was insuring them in a small brokerage firm, selling life and health insurance



TOP AESTHETICIAN: Michelle Maynard, owner of 360 Face Mind Body in Coventry, was named a finalist in the holistic category of the international skin-care competition Skin Games.

PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

policies at The Good Neighbor Alliance Corp. in Coventry, which her mother founded.

At 34, she took a leave of absence from the insurance firm and enrolled in aesthetics training.

Maynard took the leap, entering the skin-care world in 2004. She worked in other spas but always knew she wanted a place all her own, on her terms, with practices she thought clients would appreciate as well.

"I wanted to do my own thing. ... When you work for spas, you have to do a lot in a little time, but some clients need more time," she said. "I learned a lot about product ingredients."

She opened 360 Face Mind Body in 2012, choosing natural product

lines.

One product company she was interested in couldn't divulge its inactive ingredients, said Maynard. They were passed over for totally pure skin-care lines, such as Farmaesthetics Skincare Boutique in Newport and others, where formula ingredients were an open book.

It's an area where Maynard doesn't compromise.

For now, she focuses on the support of her loyal clientele.

"I made it this far," she said. ■

Caterer unifies through cuisine

BY SUSAN SHALHOUB | Contributing Writer

KAITLYN ROBERTS' LOVE of cooking can be traced back to her childhood and her late grandfather.

A school principal in upstate New York, he had a summer restaurant that was open when classes were out of session. He served simple dishes, Roberts said, nothing overly complicated but special nonetheless. More than the stirring, sautéing and spicing of dishes, her grandfather liked what food did: it brought people together. He enjoyed having family and friends over to socialize and to enjoy what he had prepared for them.

Her grandfather even went so far as to build a second, separate, full-sized kitchen on his property at home. "It was almost as big as their house," Roberts, proprietor of **Easy Entertaining Inc.** of Providence, said with a laugh. "It was considered sacred ground and my grandmother was not allowed in."

Roberts also appreciated how food unified people.

But first – a legal career beckoned.

She graduated from Wofford College in South Carolina, headed for law school. During her undergraduate years, during which she received fire-code violations for cooking on Bunsen burners in her dorm, she completed a study-abroad program in Italy, and was exposed to the country's brand of fresh, local cuisine. Back at school, the dean of foreign study suggested Roberts look into culinary school in Italy.

So, Roberts finished her undergraduate degree and let her parents know she wanted to get off the law track. She enrolled in the Apicius International School of Hospitality in Florence, Italy. But she found she was on a learning curve, truly blazing her own path in a foreign country.

"I was starting way behind," Roberts said. "Most females were in pastry," meaning that her area of study – savory foods – was also



HELPING HAND: Tammy Delfino, left, server, and Kaitlyn Roberts, owner of Easy Entertaining in Providence, prepare for an event.

PBN FILE PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

out of the norm. But she persevered, and fostered a love for Italy's fresh, local, seasonal dishes, a culinary passion she brought back to the U.S. well in advance of the farm-to-table movement.

In 2006, Roberts established Easy Entertaining in Providence.

The business has grown from bringing in a few thousand dollars a year while Roberts worked multiple jobs at the same time just starting out, to its current status: a commissary, public café and event space in a unique venue at Rising Sun Mills, a former jewelry-manufacturing plant. There are now about 30 employees on the team. This year's projected sales are \$1.5

million.

Changes have been made to accommodate growth. The company closed for more than two weeks for a renovation in January. A year in the planning, and complicated with winter weather, the interior was gutted with walls removed and a new kitchen built, complete with walk-in refrigerators and other improvements. The redo increased Easy Entertaining event capacity from about 75 to 120 people.

Just as she uses local ingredients, Roberts made it a point to use local, small-business contractors for construction. This focus on giving back is a priority. ■

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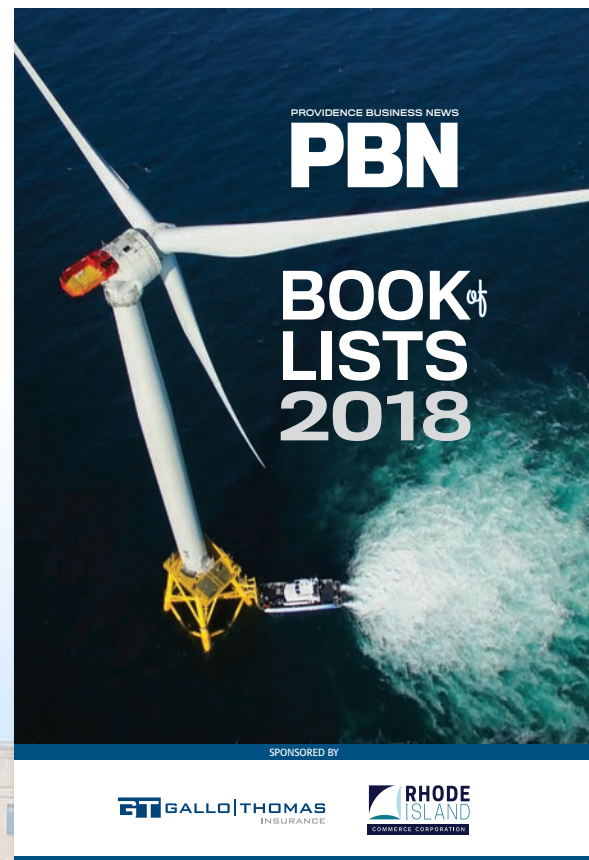
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