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Pushing for equality P.6

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The Department of Administration Office of Diversity, Equity & Opportunity would like to congratulate the Providence Business News on hosting its' 2019 Diversity Summit and Awards Program. We appreciate your contributions to increasing diversity and promoting inclusivity throughout our State. Our mission is to create and support a diverse and inclusive State government culture that values and reflects the changing demographics of Rhode Island, and we congratulate each of the award winners for their work in the diversity space.



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Congratulations to our founder,
Linda Holmes Newton,
 recipient the PBN 2019
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DAIP.US

Contact us at Information@DAIP.US
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FROM THE EDITOR

CULTURE CHANGE TAKES TIME and is never easy, but it is both instructive and heartening to see



how deeply rooted the efforts are among the honorees in PBN's 2019 Diversity & Inclusion Awards Program.

Instructive because, by virtue of their selection, they are examples for other businesses beginning or struggling with programs to create more diverse, inclusive staffs.

Heartening because, though plenty of work remains, progress has gone from a dream for many members of underrepresented groups to reality at workplaces around the state.

As Overall Diversity Champion Linda Holmes Newton says, "It is not enough to have a plan in place. The plan must be fully integrated throughout the business and have measurable accountability."

For many companies and organizations, this has meant creating positions and staff responsibilities to oversee programs and track changes. The commitment is clearly paying off.

Roger Williams University's aggressive recruitment resulted in more employees of color and

women compared to 2016, says Ame Lambert, vice president of equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer.

Nixon Peabody LLP has targeted internships and Diversity Bootcamps for law students, but also a track record of promoting to leadership positions from under-represented groups, says Rekha Chiruvolu, Nixon Peabody director of diversity and inclusion.

And the roots of the most successful programs stretch into the community, including Fidelity Investments Inc.'s efforts to promote diverse faculty at business schools and more girls and women in computing, says Amy Philbrook, Fidelity head of diversity and inclusion.

PBN would not be able to present our second Diversity & Inclusion Awards Program without the help of partner sponsors. We'd like to thank Bank of America Corp., the state of Rhode Island Office of Diversity, Equity & Opportunity and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island for their support.

Michael Mello

Michael Mello
Editor
Providence Business News

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To create and support a diverse and inclusive state government culture that values and reflects the changing demographics of Rhode Island by advancing equitable and fair opportunities for all Rhode Island Citizens to be employed by and/or do business with the State of Rhode Island.

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overall diversity champion

Newton's upbringing molded her to push for equality

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer



VITAL COMPONENT: Diversity & Inclusion Professionals founder Linda Holmes Newton feels that it is both timely and critical for businesses to develop and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives.

PBN PHOTO/DAVE HANSEN

LINDA HOLMES NEWTON sees her efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion as far more than just a job. She sees it as her responsibility.

"My great-grandfather was a slave," said Newton, founder of Providence-based nonprofit **Diversity & Inclusion Professionals** and principal of consulting firm **Newton & Newton LLC**. "He escaped from a slave dealer and fled to the District of Columbia, where he went from being someone's property to becoming an attorney and the first justice of the peace in the district."

During segregation and Jim Crow laws in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Newton attended an all-white, all-female Catholic high school. Many of her classmates were told by their parents that they could not invite her into their homes or attend events in her community. Despite this, Newton found guidance and inspiration from the rock-solid support system she had behind her.

"I grew up in a black community of economic stability, educational achievement and strong, supportive black role models," Newton said. "My parents and grandparents were college educated. They became lawyers, librarians, bankers, [information technology] professionals and teachers. They worked hard to give me the same opportunities."

"My success is a direct result of their efforts and the efforts of countless other advocates and leaders and foot soldiers for justice who gave their lives so that I could sit wherever I wanted on the bus and vote and benefit from affirmative action laws," she said. "I was taught that those with more have the responsibility and obligation

to participate, engage and speak out against injustice, inequality and hatred in its many forms."

As an adult, Newton has worked tirelessly for many years to remain true to that belief – always looking to help others.

Newton worked for more than 30 years at Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, where she rose from being customer service representative to vice president in charge of developing the company's first diversity program before retiring in 2010.

Newton didn't slow down. She founded **Diversity & Inclusion Professionals**, an organization that seeks to advance equity and inclusion as critical elements of business and community success. The organization created **Diversity Links**, a series of networking events in partnership with other organizations offering attendees opportunities to meet and engage with a diverse group of Rhode Island professionals.

DAIP has also sought to elevate the ongoing discussion about equity and inclusion through programming, by including conversations

Linda Holmes Newton

with local college and university leaders. Topics that are discussed include "Generations in the Workplace," "Key Components of a Successful Diversity & Inclusion Strategy" and "Creating a Positive Work Environment for LGBTQ Employees."

Although challenging, Newton believes it is not only timely but critical for businesses to develop and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives.

"A commitment to diversity and inclusion is a commitment to culture change," Newton said. "Changing the culture of an organization is not easy to do and it does not happen overnight. It is not enough to have a plan in place. The plan must be fully integrated throughout the business and have measurable accountability across the organization. Without effective diversity and inclusion plans, businesses will not be able to recruit top talent, grow market share or stay relevant in an increasingly diverse world."

Kim Lee, International Game Technology PLC's vice president for diversity and inclusion, met Newton in 2017 at DAIP's annual luncheon in Providence. After that meeting, the two quickly became friends, colleagues and advisers to one another.

"Linda has served as a welcoming committee for many professionals who have moved to Rhode Island and needed advice, counsel and a warm conversation to help with the transition," Lee said. "Creating a sense of belonging is core to who she is as a person. She's warm, personable, direct, strategic and generous with her time and expertise because she understands the impact interpersonal connections can have on the work we do as diversity and inclusion professionals." ■

A commitment to diversity and inclusion is a commitment to culture change.'

Linda Holmes Newton,
Diversity & Inclusion Professionals founder



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education



Roger Williams University

ly, there are people who would not have gotten the opportunity to have those positions, but let's look at the skill sets needed' to see if a nontypical applicant has those," Mattoon D'Amore said.

Roger Williams University has a Women's Affinity Group, and regular gatherings are held by and for employees of color and LGBTQ groups.

Affinity groups have both outward-looking and inward-looking functions. Partly, they work for change across the institution, and partly they provide respite for people who feel they are always on stage explaining or validating themselves in the larger community.

A Retain Grow Advance leadership academy helps groups that are historically underrepresented in management learn the unwritten rules of advancement in the institution. For instance, a newcomer to the higher-up ranks of the academic world might not understand that a big meeting or presentation is not as important as the conversations before a meeting, or that respecting the chain of command is crucial even when it seems to get in the way. The academy's inaugural group is 88% women and 27% people of color.

Trying to achieve diversity of race, gender, religion and creed is hard because it requires sacrifice.

"It means, 'I am dropping a little bit of me to have a little more of we,'" Lambert said. "If people spend time understanding different experiences, they have a platform for connection." ■

PLATFORM FOR CONNECTION: Ame Lambert, vice president for equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer at Roger Williams University, feels achieving diversity is a challenge because it requires sacrifice. Pictured with Lambert is Roger Williams University President Ioannis N. Miaoulis.
PBN PHOTO/DAVE HANSEN

RWU's process for change involves making sacrifices

BY MARY HOWE | Contributing Writer

BUILDING A MIXED COMMUNITY of people – diverse in race, gender, creed and culture – is slow, hard work for any institution. The process, which requires self-reflection and sacrifice, is personal and emotional. It can expose anger and shame.

The work, however, is worth it. A diverse working group is always better than a cookie-cutter culture, said Ame Lambert, vice president of equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer for **Roger Williams University**.

According to research, Lambert said, "Diversity is always harder to achieve, but heterogeneous groups do better, get better results. They are more creative, more innovative."

The reason? Groups of people that include unfamiliar individuals are bound to be more uncomfortable, and that discomfort helps the group function better. "They cannot fall back into patterns," Lambert said. "They are better because they are more tapped into their higher brains."

Roger Williams University has been seeing continuous improvements in recent years in the diversity of its staff.

A behavior pattern, called statistic discrimination, has made it hard for institutions to open themselves to traditional outsiders, Lambert said. Statistic discrimination says that when making a decision or a choice, we tend to default to what is familiar.

"And that tends to be white males," Lambert said.

Amy Tiberio, associate vice president of enrollment management and marketing, said diversity in institutions is important because "there are perspectives you cannot be privy to or fully appreciate if it's not your experience. You don't know what you don't know."

The university's full-time workforce now stands at 12% employees of color, a 33% increase from 2016. The workforce is 53% female, 4% higher than in 2016, according to the university.

The improvement is happening because the university is doing heavier recruitment of people from underrepresented groups. Search committees reach out to resources such as the NAACP, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island and the New England Higher Education Recruitment Consortium.

Search committees now include equity ambassadors, advocates who continually remind committee members to examine their assumptions about who would make a good hire, including applicants from less-familiar cultures. These ambassadors might step in when committee members get wrapped up in what they consider a typical profile of a job candidate.

"The notion of what is typical has been defined by exclusive institutions," said Laura Mattoon D'Amore, RWU associate professor of American studies, who has served on these committees. She said a candidate for a dean's job, for instance, might be rejected because of a lack of certain milestones in his or her career path.

"The equity ambassador might say, 'Historical-

If people spend time understanding different experiences, they have a platform for connection.'

Ame Lambert,
Roger Williams University
vice president of equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer

financial services



STAYING AHEAD: Fidelity Investments Inc. employees Prabhas Posani, left, and Ravinder Reddy Sama collaborate on a project while working at the company's Smithfield campus. The financial company works proactively in seeking employee prospects in its commitment to creating a diverse workforce.

PBN PHOTO/DAVE HANSEN

Fidelity Investments Inc.

supporting the advancement of underrepresented minorities in technology, finance and business.

The PhD Project has had an immediate effect in its first two years.

"It's a very clear signal to enrolling MBA students and graduates of color," Philbrook said. When Fidelity visits a campus seeking diverse students, it has a lot of credibility due to making these efforts, she said.

"It's one thing showing up and hoping diversity will come to you. It's another to show that they have the ability to advance to the highest level of the company," Philbrook said.

Fidelity's efforts are paying off. Company statistics show that about 40% of top-talent program participants are now women and people of color.

"Our numbers are telling us that we are making progress, and we do not plan to take our foot off the gas. The people we are hiring represent more diversity – across every dimension – than our current workforce," said Kimberly Reinhold, Fidelity's director of external communications.

"The good thing is our customers are noticing this, and employees are as well," Philbrook said. ■

Being proactive a key to Fidelity's success

BY ROB BORKOWSKI | Contributing Writer

FIDELITY INVESTMENTS INC.'S commitment to a diverse workforce focuses on efforts within and beyond company confines by fostering future candidates while proactively seeking current prospects.

Amy Philbrook, head of diversity and inclusion at Fidelity, says the two parts of her title are intertwined. Diversity is about the number of diverse employees, she said, while "inclusion is about making those numbers count."

The company sees the challenge of creating a more diverse, inclusive environment as an ongoing, legacy-building process.

"It's important to us that this work not be episodic," Philbrook said.

One area where Fidelity is proud to be making that long-term, systemic progress toward diversity, Philbrook said, is through the company's diversity-minded hiring and recruiting.

"We're reaching a broader set of employees than we would normally get if we just sat back and waited for people to apply," she said.

First, Philbrook said, Fidelity is making sure the company is looking in the right places. Job fairs, for instance, are most effective when they're held on campuses where people who are graduating are qualified to do the work Fidelity is hiring for.

The company has also increased the number of schools it recruits from, going from 12 to 200.

Also, the jobs themselves need to hit the mark.

Philbrook said Fidelity recruiters ask: "Are we sure that, if we show up in places, the jobs we have to offer will be appealing?"

Part of that appeal lies in how the job descriptions are written, Philbrook said. The descriptions need to be creative and focus on the importance of emotional intelligence, the awareness, expression

and control of your own emotions, coupled with the ability to handle interpersonal relationships empathetically.

Fidelity seeks people who are digital natives with technical dexterity, liberal arts students, lifelong learners and agile problem solvers. Often, finding those skills requires seeking out people with nonstandard degrees, including those who've earned their degrees later in life.

Advertising outside established channels and offering novel incentives would be means to attract such talent. In the long run, though, Fidelity is hoping to help make the Rhode Island community one that is more likely to encourage the type of employees they would like to hire.

Fidelity's PhD Project encourages people of color to become professors in order to increase the diversity of faculty at business schools.

The company also partners with the National Center for Women in Technology, a nonprofit aimed at increasing the influence and participation of all girls and women in computing.

The partnership between the PhD Project and the National Center for Women in Technology helps create communities that produce the people Fidelity hopes to recruit, Philbrook said. They also connect Fidelity with influencers and educators

We're reaching a broader set of employees than we would normally get if we just sat back and waited for people to apply.'

Amy Philbrook,
Fidelity Investments Inc.
head of diversity and inclusion

health care



**CVS
Health
Corp.**

ENGAGING ALL COLLEAGUES:

CVS Health Corp. employees Samantha Levine, left, and Marleny Luna converse in the company's Woonsocket offices. The health care company offers various programs to promote workplace diversity, including Colleague Resource Groups and has partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor to create a registered apprenticeship program for pharmacy technicians. COURTESY CVS HEALTH CORP.

CVS mission a commitment to helping others

BY JOHN A. LAHTINEN | Contributing Writer

AS ONE OF the nation's premier health innovation companies serving more than 100 million patients and customers each year, **CVS Health Corp.** knows all about working with people with unique backgrounds and needs.

In fact, it's the company's business.

"The company's commitment to diversity and inclusion is not a standalone objective; it is deeply rooted in our purpose of helping people on their path to better health," said David L. Casey, CVS vice president of workforce strategies and chief diversity officer. "Our strategic approach to managing diversity touches every aspect of the business, from maintaining a diverse workforce and inclusive culture, spending nearly \$2 billion with more than 3,000 small and diverse businesses in our supply chain, and offering products and services that meet the needs of all of our customers, patients and communities."

Seeking to engage all colleagues in the process and enable every business function to deliver on near- and longer-term goals, CVS utilizes a four-pillar framework for its Strategic Diversity Management program. Those aspects are workforce representation, inclusion and belonging, talent systems and marketplace diversity.

"Developing a diverse, highly trained workforce that reflects our customers and the neighborhoods in which they live is a win-win for CVS and the nearly 10,000 communities we are privileged to serve," Casey said. "Diversity management is not simply a function of department or title; every colleague can lead from where they are."

According to Casey, more than 22,000 CVS employees currently participate in the company's Colleague Resource Groups. The groups offer colleagues the opportunity to voluntarily come

together with others who share or support a particular affinity, identity, focus and/or constituency. In addition to offering leadership development, mentoring, networking and education opportunities, the groups also provide insight and advice to CVS leadership.

Cara Svoboda has been with CVS for 14 years, and has been a Colleague Resource Group program adviser for the past year.

"I am extremely passionate about the work we do in Strategic Diversity Management here, but especially the CRGs," said Svoboda, who first got involved in CRGs in 2013 after working for more than eight years as a pharmacy technician. "The SDM team helped me grow as an individual through development opportunities, such as taking on leadership roles, going to workshops, attending conferences and learning the art of networking. I've also been able to learn so much about different cultures, religions, and people in general."

In the last four years, CVS has hired nearly 7,000 colleagues with disabilities. Last year, in association with the National Consortium of State-Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers, CVS opened simulated storefronts and pharmacies at rehabilitation centers around the country.

Additionally, CVS has partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor to create a registered apprenticeship program for pharmacy technicians and plans to hire 8,000 registered apprentices by 2022.

CVS' innovative and inclusive programming has dramatically changed the company.

"CVS Health has evolved so much over the past decade, I don't think I ever could have expected to have the level of impact we have been able to have over that time frame," Casey said. "To engage in work that has a direct impact on our ability to serve more than 100 million people a year and empower more than 295,000 colleagues is more than I could have ever hoped for. It's humbling and gratifying to see the energy and passion coming from our colleagues making meaningful contributions to our diversity-management strategy, regardless of where they sit in the organization. The issues can be complex at times, but quite frankly, I consider myself lucky to be able to do it." ■

It's humbling and gratifying to see the energy and passion coming from our colleagues making meaningful contributions to our diversity-management strategy.'

David L. Casey,
CVS Health Corp. vice president of workforce strategies and chief diversity officer

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A GOOD RESOURCE: MetLife Auto & Home Insurance Agency Inc. offers seven Diversity Business Resource networks to help promote inclusion within the office. Pictured, back row from left: Dani Mubarek, Tina Southiseng, Jim Farugia, Emily Morgan, Titus Her, Lyndalu Pieranunzi and Sarah Deede Alfieri. Front row from left: Venus Lanzot, Afua Akoto, Kandy Mimande and Hayley O'Donnell.
PBN PHOTO/DAVE HANSEN

MetLife Auto & Home Insurance Agency Inc.

improve the results of a company,” she said. “I also appreciate how leaders are starting to – in a more holistic and more active way – sponsor other leaders that don’t always look like them. ... My view is you have to continue to have an impact on the people you touch because it creates a ripple effect. ... That’s how real change occurs.”

MetLife also has the size and resources to influence others. Senior Communications Specialist Megan Lemoi said leaders both coach and encourage diversity and gender equality among suppliers, as well as have tremendous leverage to require procurement teams to include diverse suppliers in requests for proposals.

Last year, MetLife had more than 600 diverse business partners, representing 19% of its total supplier spend.

“We recognize the value of hiring and promoting people with disabilities and promoting a culture where associates feel empowered to reach their full potential through inclusion, representation and access to essential resources in the workplace,” Alfieri said. “Creating a more inclusive workplace allows us to become stronger, more innovative and better at serving our customers every day.” ■

MetLife Auto & Home connects with communities it serves

BY WENDY PIERMAN MITZEL | Contributing Writer

AT ITS WARWICK headquarters, MetLife Auto & Home Insurance Agency Inc. aims to have its employees represent the diversity of its clients.

“We are only as strong as our talent,” MetLife Senior Vice President Darla Finchum said. “Our Diversity and Inclusion Groups give associates the opportunity to develop leadership skills and a chance to collaborate with their peers and leaders on culture changes. It also enables MetLife Auto & Home to connect more personally with the communities we serve.”

MetLife is one of the nation’s leading personal property and casualty insurance providers, insuring nearly 4 million automobiles and homes nationwide. For the 400 associates who work there, the company offers seven Diversity Business Resource networks – voluntary groups of associates aligned with a particular affinity, said Sarah Deede Alfieri, MetLife’s diversity and inclusion community leader.

Among the networks are iRise for Rising Professionals at MetLife; GLAM for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Associates & Allies; MVET, focused on recruiting and helping military veterans; MetLife Diverse Abilities; the Women’s Business Network; and Families at MetLife, which promotes a supportive culture for members of working families.

Even more important is how these teams work, both within their own networks and with each other.

“About four years ago, we created our Community Lead Team, bringing together individuals from each of our diversity and inclusion groups to align our efforts and take a holistic approach,” Alfieri said. “By doing this, we created one main channel of communication to ensure employees felt included and were aware of what is going on within

MetLife and within the communities we represent.

“Instead of working in silos, our teams came together once a month to promote events and initiatives, with a goal to make all associates feel welcome to participate without the pressure of becoming a member of one or more groups.”

Everyone comes to the table, so to speak, including community and charitable leads, for development of all events, sponsorships and networking opportunities.

“For example, we participated in Rock Your Socks for World Down Syndrome Day. We encouraged associates to wear fun, brightly colored socks in support of raising awareness for Down syndrome,” Alfieri said. “This year, one of the employees brought in his son who has Down syndrome and had him participate in the event and vote on his favorite fun socks.”

The model, which has proved successful in Rhode Island, is being replicated and expanded to other MetLife sites nationwide, Alfieri said.

Finchum said the groups have helped create a shift in culture, from the ground up to leadership.

“I love that the faces of leaders are starting to look different and that there are a lot of really powerful proof points today highlighting that diverse leadership teams and board of directors really

We recognize the value of hiring and promoting people with disabilities and promoting a culture where **associates feel empowered to reach their full potential.**

Sarah Deede Alfieri,
MetLife Auto & Home Insurance Agency Inc.
diversity and inclusion community leader

legal services



LEADING BY EXAMPLE: From left, Nixon Peabody LLP associate Meghan L. Hopkins, Providence office Managing Partner Andrew Prescott, department attorney Shelagh C.N. Michaud and associate Aaron F. Nadich help emphasize the firm's goal in being a leader in workplace diversity and inclusion.

PBN PHOTO/TRACY JENKINS

Nixon Peabody LLP

this work.”

As director of diversity and inclusion, Chiruvolu reports directly to Nixon Peabody's management committee, which, she said, “shows it comes from the top. You know what needs to be done and we will move further along because it started at the top.”

She said that when she came to work at Nixon Peabody, the diversity and inclusion efforts were previously led by partners at the firm. She was hired for her current role because the company saw the need for someone dedicated exclusively to the task of advancing diversity and inclusion initiatives.

“It's a passion of mine. I've always been involved in diversity and inclusion in the legal profession,” she said.

Chiruvolu is also happy to note the industry itself is now focusing a lot on this issue. “To Nixon Peabody, this is an opportunity to make a difference in the industry within the next 10 years,” she said. “I will say I already see a change. I see more attention paid to unconscious bias in the workplace. We pay more attention to true equity. Studies show more inclusion and diversity in the workplace leads to more innovation [and] creativity, leading to better outcomes. It's good for our clients. It's good for our company.” ■

Nixon Peabody's staffing success comes from the top

BY MICHAEL J. DECICCO | Contributing Writer

NIXON PEABODY LLP'S focus on employing an inclusive staff from diverse backgrounds is no mere nebulous goal. It has been an achievement that has helped define its success.

According to company statistics, more than half of the members in this year's equity partner class are from diverse backgrounds. Sixty percent of the members in this year's income partners class are diverse attorneys. The firm has also received a 100% rating on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.

The Providence office's managing partner, Andrew Prescott, said a big part of the effort to reach these numbers comes from its close relationship with the Roger Williams University School of Law in Bristol and Providence, and the firm's multiyear support of the school's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lecture series and annual Diversity Symposium. Nixon Peabody visits the campus every summer to recruit for its Diverse Scholars, a paid-internship program the national law firm started in Washington, D.C., in 2016.

These internships are available for second- or third-year law students to work in Nixon Peabody's offices during either their school semester or during the summer. Since the program launched, the firm has hired 10 to 15 interns at its offices around the country, Prescott said. He noted four of these interns started as first-year associates this fall. One intern from the Providence office with a nontraditional educational background and valuable work and life experiences has since become an associate in Nixon Peabody's Boston office.

In a similar effort, the firm holds Diversity Bootcamps, one-day programs for rising young law students, in various offices. Nixon Peabody Director of Diversity and Inclusion Rekha Chiruvolu explained that the students are brought into the office, where they spend the day with attorneys who

share their experience working in a big law firm. Then, the students are put through fun, hypothetical scenarios to help them solve sample situations that may arise in the firm. This is followed by a luncheon that allows the students to network with each other and the firm's staff to develop ongoing relationships “and hopefully find a mentor,” Chiruvolu said.

In its recent work with Diversity Lab, a national incubator for exchanging innovative ideas and solutions to boost diversity and inclusion in corporate America, Nixon Peabody earned the incubator's Mansfield Certification Plus status for the last two years. The firm was recognized for achieving the “Mansfield Rule” goal, which requires that at least 30% of the candidates considered for leadership roles within the participating organizations must be women, racially diverse or LGBTQ attorneys and attorneys with disabilities.

These policies are derived from the firm's executive staff.

“As a law firm focused on the future, diversity and inclusion reside at the heart of our firm's top priorities,” Nixon Peabody CEO and Managing Partner Andrew Glincher said. “We need to actively seek out those who challenge our perspective and commit to intentionally fostering an environment where everyone can bring their best selves to

Studies show more inclusion and diversity in the workplace leads to more innovation, creativity, leading to better outcomes. **It's good for our clients. It's good for our company.**

Rekha Chiruvolu,
Nixon Peabody LLP director
of diversity and inclusion

nonprofit/social-service agency



EMBRACING THE COMMUNITY: Providence-based nonprofit Amos House creates programs to help the homeless and unemployed. Pictured from left are: Michelle Pugh, director of workforce education; Cendy Gonzalez, human resources director; Betsy Beach, adult numeracy instructor; Kalimara Otto-Gentry, director of A Hand Up Program; and Eileen Hayes, Amos House CEO and president.
PBN PHOTO/TRACY JENKINS

Amos House

Recently, Hayes taught how to work with people who endured various traumas, and how to do so sensibly and with sensitivity. Other training has addressed race and racism, working with people with disabilities, and understanding nuances in different cultures and religions.

“Our staff identified areas where they felt they needed support and tools to better help the folks we work with,” said Otto-Gentry, A Hand Up Program director. “And, the staff wanted a safe space to work through and talk about these sorts of issues.”

That safe space has come in less-formal monthly “Community Conversations.”

These grassroots discussions are geared toward the organization’s internal community and welcome anyone interested in the topic du jour, one that may not normally be discussed during normal training.

“This has been an interesting way to get into the things we do that aren’t as apparent or the beliefs we hold that aren’t as on the surface and have people think about them,” said Pugh, director of workforce education.

Next year, the agency plans to engage the broader community in discussing how race and racism have impacted members.

“The last couple years we have been responding to the wider world and what’s going on there,” Hayes said. “We still have some ways to go, but I think our willingness to be open about the areas we need to improve on is the first step.” ■

Amos House’s aimed to support community

BY KIMBERLEY EDGAR | Contributing Writer

THE YEAR WAS 2016. Three high-profile police shootings with racial overtones in as many days gripped the nation’s collective conscience.

Although no such shooting occurred in Rhode Island, conversations about race and racism percolated in many corners of Providence, including at **Amos House**.

Instead of dividing people at the 460 Pine St. campus, that dialogue propelled everyone who was touched by the incidents to greater unity through diversity.

“We looked at ourselves as an organization and asked questions about how diverse we are,” Amos House CEO and President Eileen Hayes said. “We wanted to make sure when we are interacting with staff, clients and the community, we are doing it with sensitivity and awareness so we can be as inclusive and responsive as we can be.”

Founded in 1976 as a small soup kitchen, Amos House has become one of Rhode Island’s largest social-service agencies and the state’s largest soup kitchen – serving about 140,000 meals annually.

With an increased menu of programs, the agency serves more than the hungry. The homeless, unemployed and former prison inmates also benefit, as Amos House fulfills its mission to help people help themselves out of homelessness and poverty.

“Volunteered here for work. ... was so wow-ed [sic] by the folks who run this operation,” posted Nanda Carvalhal in a Google review. “[They] are all so friendly and non-judgmental of the people who go there off the street to eat.”

The campus boasts several buildings, including permanent supportive housing and a mother-child reunification center. It also has a 3-year-old, 29,000-square-foot, light-filled community center

complete with dining hall, social-service offices, and training classrooms for culinary, carpentry and maintenance education.

Amos House employs many who were once clients – an average of 15 of them at its two businesses, More than a Meal Catering and Amos House Builds. Another 25 employees work in other organization-supported programs.

The agency is embracing and encouraging diversity from the top down to benefit the more than 15,000 clients served annually:

- An expanded board includes two new minority members, one homosexual.
- Half of the management team members are racially diverse women.
- The 80-member staff includes 40 employees of color, five who speak Spanish and many from diverse religious affiliations and sexual preferences.
- Four of six people trained at off-site leadership conferences are nonwhite.
- Minority subcontractors helping build the community center made up 33% of the total workforce.

But the formation of Amos House’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee may best exemplify the agency’s commitment to diversity.

Headed by Kalimara Otto-Gentry and Michelle Pugh, the committee meets at least monthly to help shape training in best practices to create inclusive environments.

We wanted to make sure when we are interacting with staff, clients and the community, we are doing it with sensitivity and awareness.’

Eileen Hayes,
Amos House CEO
and president

DIVERSITY OFFICERS (ranked by number of full-time employees)

2019 rank	Company Website Diversity officer(s)	Address Phone	No. of local full-time equivalents	Corporate diversity programs
1 2018: 1	Rhode Island ri.gov Cheryl A. Burrell, associate director, Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity	1 Capitol Hill Providence, R.I. 02908 (401) 222-2280	13,722	The Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity's purpose is to ensure nondiscrimination, diversity, equity and equal opportunity in all aspects of state government
2 2018: 2	CVS Health Corp. cvshealth.com David L. Casey, vice president, workforce strategies, and chief diversity officer	1 CVS Drive Woonsocket, R.I. 02895 (401) 765-1500	8,300	Employs team of colleagues dedicated to ensuring youths, mature workers, veterans and individuals with disabilities have a place within the company
3 2018: 3	Brown University brown.edu Shontay Delalue, vice president for institutional equity and diversity	1 Prospect St. Providence, R.I. 02912 (401) 863-1000	4,147	The Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity offers multiple programs and initiatives surrounding diversity, including the Diversity Advisory Board, Diversity Luncheon Series and staff professional-development days/workshops
4 2018: NL	Fidelity Investments Inc. fidelity.com Amy Philbrook, head of diversity and inclusion	900 Salem St. Smithfield, R.I. 02917 (401) 292-5000	3,200	Offers six Employee Resource Groups, which are self-organized groups of employees with common interests in areas such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and military
5 2018: 4	Tufts Health Plan tuftshealthplan.com Juan Lopera, vice president of marketing, public plans and corporate business diversity officer	75 Fountain St., Suite 100 Providence, R.I. 02903 (401) 272-3499	2,900	Partners with its Business Resource Groups to help maintain and promote an inclusive environment for all employees; Business Diversity program reports to senior management on various initiatives to meet the needs of ethnic minorities
6 2018: NL	University of Rhode Island web.uri.edu Mary Grace A. Almandrez, interim chief diversity officer	35 Campus Ave. South Kingstown, R.I. 02881 (401) 874-2116	2,730	URI has training programs that address diversity fundamentals, hidden bias, issues affecting the LGBTQ community, diversity in employee searches and action to be taken in sexual harassment/violence cases
7 2018: 5	Bank of America N.A. bankofamerica.com Cynthia Bowman, chief diversity and inclusion officer	100 Westminster St. Providence, R.I. 02903 (800) 432-1000	2,500	Employee Networks, which are support groups for employees with common identities, including the Asian Leadership Network, Black Professional Group and Disability Advocacy Network
8 2018: 6	Amica Mutual Insurance Co. amica.com Jill Andy, senior vice president, human resources; Ramona Royal, human resources officer	100 Amica Way Lincoln, R.I. 02865 (800) 242-6422	1,663	Amica makes diversity and inclusion an active part of the company, and addresses issues that are central to the company, its employees and customers
9 2018: NL	Providence College providence.edu Jackie Rankin, acting chief of diversity	1 Cunningham Square Providence, R.I. 02918 (401) 865-2294	1,414	Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Mini Grants support efforts by faculty, staff and student organizations through programs and leadership experiences to help make the college a diverse community
10 2018: NL	Ocean State Job Lot oceanstatejoblot.com Bob Selle, chief human resources officer; Alex Arroyo, director, organizational effectiveness and learning	375 Commerce Park Road North Kingstown, R.I. 02852 (401) 295-2672	1,395	Focuses on leveraging diversity of thought, experience, background and any other perceived barrier to create balanced teams, with attention on recruiting and developing talents of its team members
11 2018: NL	FM Global fmglobal.com Sonserae Toles, vice president, inclusion	270 Central Ave. Johnston, R.I. 02919 (401) 275-3000	1,204	Partners with Society of Women Engineers and the National Society of Black Engineers, with recruitment, development and networking opportunities for potential employees
12 2018: NL	Roger Williams University rwu.edu Ame Lambert, vice president for equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer; Ralph E. Tavares, director of diversity and outreach, Roger Williams University School of Law	1 Old Ferry Road Bristol, R.I. 02809 (401) 253-1040	1,040	Search committees reach out to resources for recruitment, including the NAACP, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island and the New England Higher Education Recruitment Consortium; Women's Affinity Group
13 2018: 7	Rhode Island College ric.edu Anna Cano Morales, assistant vice president, community, equity and diversity division	600 Mount Pleasant Ave. Providence, R.I. 02908 (401) 456-8000	1,007	Unity Center offers opportunities to explore cultural equality, Disabilities Services Office, LGBTQ+
13 2018: 8	International Game Technology PLC igt.com Kim Barker Lee, vice president, diversity and inclusion	10 Memorial Blvd. Providence, R.I. 02903 (401) 392-1000	1,007	Created the Office of Diversity and Inclusion within its People and Transformation organization; responsible for implementing the Global Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion
15 2018: 10	Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island bcbsri.com Guillaume Bagal, diversity and inclusion lead	500 Exchange St. Providence, R.I. 02903 (401) 459-1000	778	Blue University training program; multiple employee resource business groups, including Black Council @ Blue, Blue pRIde, Emerging Blue Talent, Latin@Link, Military Services and Parents@Work; ProjectSEARCH program
16 2018: 12	Rhode Island School of Design risd.edu Matthew Shenoda, vice president of social equity and inclusion	2 College St. Providence, R.I. 02903 (401) 454-6100	749	Annual training for senior leadership focused on diversity, equity and inclusion; Martin Luther King Jr. lecture series; Social Equity & Inclusion lecture series
17 2018: 9	Bryant University bryant.edu Kevin Martins, director, PwC Center for Diversity & Inclusion, special assistant to the president on inclusive excellence; Mailee Kue, assistant vice president, student engagement	1150 Douglas Pike Smithfield, R.I. 02917 (401) 232-6000	727	PwC Center for Diversity and Inclusion serves as a resource to empower students, staff and faculty to be active participants in building a diverse and responsible community
18 2018: NL	Toray Plastics (America) Inc. toraytpa.com Lisa A. Ahart, vice president, U.S. corporate human resources and environmental health and safety	50 Belver Ave. North Kingstown, R.I. 02852 (401) 294-4511	724	Recruits, hires, trains and promotes individuals, and ensures all other personnel actions are administered, without regard to race, religion, creed, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or other legally protected status
19 2018: 13	Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island nhpri.org David Burnett, chief growth officer	910 Douglas Pike Smithfield, R.I. 02917 (401) 459-6000	489	Diversity and Inclusion Council, which gains insight on members' perceptions of the diversity effort and monitors progress of diversity initiatives

CLOSER LOOK

Total number of full-time employees:
49,696

LIST RESEARCHED BY
James Bessette

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