



# Alumni Connection

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**Please look for the special appeal from Executive Director Mike Ritz on Page 4.**



*Leadership Rhode Island staged a swearing in ceremony for the members of the Central Falls Charter Review Commission. Governor Lincoln Chafee was among those in attendance.*

## IDEAS for Central Falls

### Theta II class, alumni team up with city residents

The Eureka moment came on a day in early autumn with a simple question: "Why not go to Central Falls?"

Leadership Rhode Island's executive director, Mike Ritz, had settled on a problem-solving initiative called IDEAS (Imagine, Discuss, Engage, Act, Solve) as the 2012 class theme. He created an advisory council and resolved to draw more heavily on LRI's greatest asset, its 1,600 alumni.

Still, one big question remained. What problems would the alumni and the Theta II class tackle?

The notion of targeting Central Falls came up during one of many advisory council discussions. It caught on quickly. The city, coping with bankruptcy, clearly could benefit in large and small ways

from a volunteer force of nonpartisan problem-solvers.

Test marketing the idea, Ritz and others talked to an array of folks familiar with Central Falls and met with Judge Robert Flanders, the city's bankruptcy receiver, who welcomed LRI's entry on the scene.

From the get-go, LRI established two guiding principles. It would address only problems that bubble up from residents and other stakeholders and it would operate independently from the receiver.

The Central Falls initiative emerged from this backdrop of thought, debate, counsel and planning.

That's why the 59 members of Theta II conducted "community reconnaissance"

*Continued on Page 4*

## Leadership Rhode Island

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# Letter from the Chair

On behalf of the Board of Governors I would like to extend greetings to our valued alumni and express our hope that you will enjoy this newsletter. Quite some time has passed since the last Leadership Rhode Island newsletter and much has transpired.



Scott W.  
DiChristofero '00

Recent projects by the Theta II class benefiting Central Falls, LRI's role assisting the Central Falls Charter Review Commission and the sponsoring of public interest forums in a new partnership with the Providence Journal have resulted in a surge of positive press coverage.

We believe this increased prominence has directly resulted in increased numbers of applicants to the Core program and a growing demand for the College Leadership Rhode Island (CLRI) program. Most importantly, these activities have provided us with new avenues to reconnect and engage alumni.

Our Executive Director, Mike Ritz, tirelessly seeks out alumni to assist with enrichment activities, Core and CLRI program session days and targeted advisory groups such as the IDEAS Advisory Council. We have experienced an increase in our

dues-paying membership and continue to commit ourselves to adding value to being "a graduate of Leadership RI and a member of the Greatest Class ever!"

Our organization's next contribution to Rhode Island will be through incoming Iota II class members and the projects they undertake to benefit another geographic area of the state. Your awareness of our efforts, willingness to answer our call for assistance as presenters and advisors and, most of all, your financial support through dues and a special Central Falls appeal (described elsewhere in this newsletter) will ensure our continued contributions to the betterment of Rhode Island.

Best wishes from the LRI Board of Governors.

## Who's Who? at un-Masquerade Party

Just bring yourself to the un-Masquerade Party – Leadership Rhode Island will take care of the rest.

Think of it as a "Who's Who?" celebration to be held at the Hope Club Oct. 26. Guests may drop by anytime between 5 and 9 p.m. for some fun, food and surprises, including the un-masking of the 2013 class theme. Graduates of the Theta II Class will be guests of honor.

Tickets are \$60. Ten percent of the proceeds will go to the Central Falls program you choose: Calcutt's 21st Century Community Learning Center, Family Leadership Institute, Neighborhood Crime Watch, Summer Arts Initiative, Progreso Latino, Project GOAL, Leadership Central Falls or Save Chocolateville.

RSVP online at [www.oct26unmasquerade.eventbrite.com](http://www.oct26unmasquerade.eventbrite.com) or call 401-273-1574 x105.

# Survey says: Alumni want action

Leadership Rhode Island should assume a more activist, problem-solving role, according to a survey of prominent LRI graduates.

The extensive telephone survey, conducted last fall by private consultant Edward J. Caron, reached 48 alumni from the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, a cross-section of alumni from the business and nonprofit communities and from state and local governments.

In addition to giving overwhelming support to a problem-solving posture for LRI, the alumni who talked with Caron also said they were willing to participate in some way.

"It is about time we tackle an important issue and take a stand; we have never really exploited the advantage of our alumni," commented a graduate from the 1980s. A problem-solving initiative would make LRI more relevant,

said another. Identifying and solving an issue of major impact "is what LRI taught us to do," said another.

Those surveyed also offered advice. Most worthwhile issues already have multiple advocates; it's important to avoid redundancy, advised one executive. Select issues that are really fixable, urged others.

The problem has to be important enough to mobilize alumni, but not one that invites political interference, cautioned one interviewee. Go big – even if it has political connotations, countered another.

Only 3 of the 48 alumni said "no" when asked if they were interested in a problem-solving effort. Taking a public stand on an issue doesn't fit LRI's mission and would be insulting to those affected, commented one alumna.

When asked to name vexing problems

that are keeping Rhode Island from being a great place to live and work, answers flowed easily.

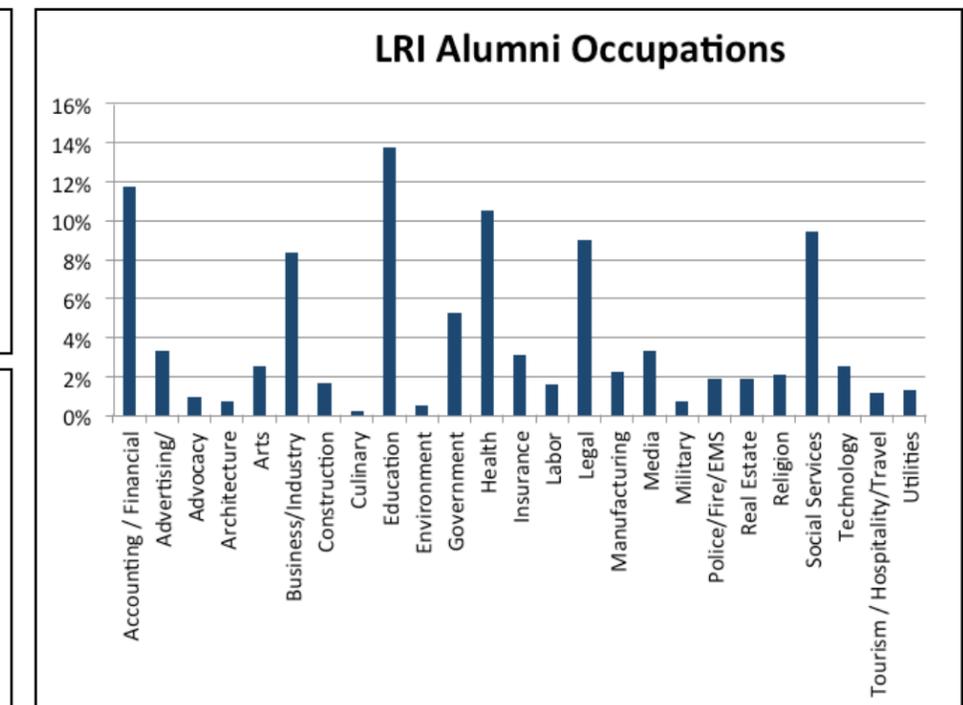
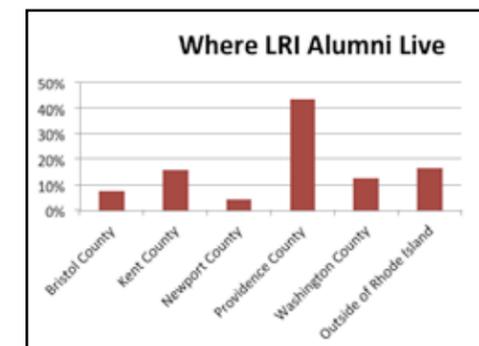
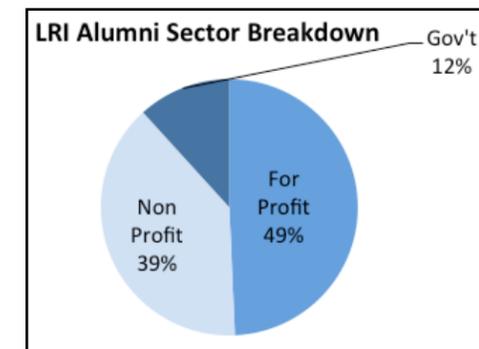
Some individuals cited the need for big change: consolidate the state's school districts; reform the prison system; overhaul the state's tax policies, especially those involving business; limit legislative terms.

Others named smaller, focused efforts: analyze why there's a mismatch between training/education programs and needs of employers; evaluate charter schools; develop a financial literacy initiative, beautify ten of the most visible Rhode Island locations.

Alumni also mentioned mindset issues: neutralize cynicism within the state; create a more aggressive culture of innovation; address ethics and corruption.

To request a copy of the report, email [office@leadershipri.org](mailto:office@leadershipri.org).

## LRI graduates by the numbers



# WE NEED YOUR HELP

Dear LRI Alumni,

We need a significant donation from you. Will you contribute? We don't generally ask, but we must. As you have read in this newsletter, we have spent a year getting to know the people of Central Falls and engaging in projects to improve the lives of its residents in large and small ways. Central Falls will be out of bankruptcy and the receiver gone by the end of the year. This tipping point gives urgency and gravity to our appeal to support an effort we are calling Leadership Central Falls. We want to make a lasting impact that capitalizes on all we have learned.



Mike Ritz '07

Leadership Central Falls (LCF) is a custom-designed leadership course to empower a newly formed network of change agents, lovers and leaders — the residents and key stakeholders who value an improved quality of life for Central Falls. The program will begin next month with 25-30 participants. If needed, a second and final class would be invited to participate in 2013.

This is your opportunity, as stewards of the state, to become a founding contributor to a program created to strengthen the inside of a community and to ensure the sustainability of the fiscal and social turnaround underway. Residents will participate tuition-free, promising instead to give back by volunteering at least 100 hours of time on projects benefitting their city.

We have already raised half of the funding necessary to launch Leadership Central Falls, thanks to the generous support of organizations like The Providence Journal, Amica Insurance and National Grid. The remainder — \$25,000 — must come from you, Rhode Island's legacy of leaders. We have good reason to believe (see Caron report, page 3) that LRI alumni will welcome an opportunity to improve life in Rhode Island.

Please help us build capacity for Central Falls to continue its progression to true sustainability. This is the most critical time for this community. Will you make a lasting investment in your neighbors? Will you contribute?

## How to make your donation

There are two easy ways to make a tax-deductible donation to support Leadership Central Falls:

- Simply write out a check to Leadership Rhode Island and send it in the enclosed envelope.
- Go online to <http://bit.ly/LeadershipCF> and make a payment by credit card.

# New program to strengthen city leaders

Leadership Central Falls, a training program specially tailored for at least 25 of the city's emerging and current leaders, gets underway next month.

The six-month leadership training program will begin with a daylong orientation retreat at Sandywoods Farms in Tiverton during which presentations will be made on effective leadership, servant leadership and teambuilding. Participants will hear about the team projects conducted in Central Falls this year by LRI's Theta II class. Following the October retreat, there will be five monthly Saturday sessions.

"We've been told that our statewide alumni expertise and influence are needed to nurture more leaders in Central Falls. Localizing our mission to provide LCF participants with knowledge and access to resources will do just that," says Mike Ritz, LRI executive director.

The program will be tuition-free, but each participant will be asked to pledge at least 100 hours to a civic engagement activity. The goal is to engage others — residents, employers, employees, stakeholders — in whatever they do. Graduation will be held in conjunction with the annual LRI alumni luncheon in March. The class-selected speaker will deliver the keynote at the luncheon and presentations of their projects will be made.

# LRI's year in Central Falls

*Continued from Page 1*

to gather the opinions of more than 300 residents and stakeholders about which projects would be most beneficial.

And, that's why four members of one Theta II team recently travelled to the Calcutt Middle School for the eighth time to guide staff and board members of Project GOAL in the development of the organization's first-ever strategic plan.

Project GOAL (Greater Opportunities for Athletes to Learn) has had remarkable academic success with middle school boys by using a seemingly simple strategy in its after-school program: homework and tutoring first, soccer, second. Ninety percent of the youngsters who participate go on to four-year colleges.

With such a strong record of success, why do they need a strategic plan?

"They are small and they want to grow," explains Cindy McDermott, a member of the team working with Project GOAL.

Another team is planning a three-day restaurant weekend to boost the local economy by luring new customers to the city for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Dine Central Falls will run Oct. 18-20.

Local stakeholders appear pleased with the Theta II efforts. The basic needs team has done an "amazing job" recruiting LRI alumni

to lead workshops for the Family Leadership Institute, says its executive director, Patricia Martinez, an LRI '95 graduate. It is a blessing, she says, to be able to tap the richness of the organization's professionally diverse alumni.

Perhaps the most public effort involves LRI's role in recruiting, screening and recommending applicants to serve on a Charter Review Commission.

In a whirlwind 10-day period in March, LRI staff, Theta II class members and alumni generated a stunning 48 applicants. LRI staged a swearing in ceremony for the nine commissioners attended by Governor Chafee, Judge Flanders and a crowd of officials and fans.

A Theta II team is working to generate a turnout at the polls and to help voters understand the proposed changes to the charter that will appear on the November ballot. We are not taking sides, emphasizes team member, Jason Yoon. "Our main focus is simply encouraging citizens to vote and to interact more with their local government."

Throughout the year, Ritz has displayed an uncanny knack for finding alumni to resolve problems and fill unexpected needs. For example, he quickly linked up the government team with 2010 alumnus, Jeshua Zapata, owner of Xzito Creative Solutions and a

# '87 alum pledges donation

Bill Allen, adjunct lecturer in public policy, and a group of Brown University graduate students, recently visited Central Falls with Mike Ritz. Allen, an '87 LRI alumnus, says the tour persuaded him of the need to financially support Leadership Central Falls.

He writes:

"We met with leaders who are champions of significant reform in government and civic life in the City .... Court oversight will end soon. One big challenge is to recruit and train leaders who will insure that the progress and change that have begun will be sustained and a vibrant civic life established. ...

"At the end of our tour, I resolved to return home and send my contribution. I urge my fellow LRI alumni to do the same!"



Calcutt Middle School students visited Garrison Confections to see firsthand how Save Chocolateville bars are made. Chef/owner Andrew Shotts is pictured at right.

Central Falls native, to assist in the design of flyers and posters to help residents better understand the proposed charter changes.

Other teams are working to establish a Neighborhood Watch Initiative, to boost recycling, and to help launch an online mentoring program linking Calcutt Middle School students with high school students from nearby school districts.

In addition to class projects, the Central Falls initiative spawned other ventures, including a summer art program for children.

The creation and sale of gourmet chocolate

bars, drawing positive attention to a Central Falls business and raising money for the city's children, may well rate as the most unusual endeavor. The Save Chocolateville enterprise, the brainchild of Ritz and Andrew Shotts, chef/owner of Garrison Confections, has sold more than 3,000 bars since February.

"We've had bumps in the road and we've made mistakes," Ritz says of the Central Falls initiative. "But, the effort has produced great outcomes for the current class, the Central Falls community, and the state of Rhode Island."

# Catch up with your class at Open House

Network with alumni, chat with applicants to the 2013 Iota II class, and enjoy the work of some of the state's youngest artists at Leadership Rhode Island's annual Open House Sept. 27 at the Candita Clayton Gallery located inside the historic Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket.

Proceeds will support LRI's Tuition Assistance Fund used to subsidize participation fees for leaders who would not otherwise be able to join the Iota II class once accepted into the Core Program. Tickets are \$50.

This year's event, which traditionally draws 100 to 150 guests, will feature live music and delicious cuisine from Rasoi Restaurant. The party, a celebration of LRI camaraderie, will run from 5 to 8 p.m.

The gallery will be displaying the art produced by the children, 7 to 12 years old, who participated in the LRI-inspired Central Falls Summer Arts Initiative (CFSAI) run by interior designer Kaitlyn Frolich and gallery owner Candita Clayton. If guests purchase pieces of art – and we hope you do – the money will go directly to the children.

The gallery where the open house will be held is Unit 105 of Hope Artiste, 999 Main Street, Pawtucket. Guests may RSVP online at <http://sep27openhouse.eventbrite.com/> or by calling LRI at 401-273-1574 x105.

Round up your "best class ever" and come out for a great evening.



*Works created by students in the Central Falls Summer arts Initiative will be for sale at the Open House, with proceeds going directly to the young artists.*

## Nominate someone for 2013 class

The deadline for applications to Leadership Rhode Island's 2013 Core Program is Sept. 28.

Do you know an established or emerging leader who would benefit from LRI's legendary 10-month curriculum? Do you know individuals who could leverage the knowledge, network, and experience to benefit themselves and their organizations for the betterment of Rhode Island? Would you vouch for them? If so, please nominate them or encourage them to apply.

For more than 30 years, LRI's statewide program has helped 1,600 recognized leaders identify where strategic alliances might be forged across sectors and industries in order to develop stronger, more insightful and resourceful leaders. Through participation in the Core Program, class members become more involved, more visible, and more empowered than ever before.

The tuition fee remains the same. The time commitment is significant. The experience is invaluable. The statewide need for dedicated thoughtful leaders to bond together, inspire and rejuvenate one another, and re-launch themselves back into the Rhode Island community with fresh perspective, drive, creative vision and strengthened resolve has never been greater!

Application details and the online form may be completed at [www.tfaforms.com/251678](http://www.tfaforms.com/251678) or call Leadership Rhode Island at 401-273-1574.



## Theta II highlights

*At right: Cindy McDermott, Scott Ostrowski and Tracey Conlon prepare to take flight during National Defense Day at Quonset Air National Guard Base.*



*At left: Scott Ostrowski, Bill White, Christina Lopes and tour guide Dr. Bongsup P. Cho, professor of medicinal chemistry at the University of Rhode Island, walk the construction site of the URI School of Pharmacy.*



*Above: Cindy McDermott and Pauline Bellavance meet with Alex and Ani creator Carolyn Rafaelian and CEO Giovanni Feroce on Economic Development Day.*

*At left: Ken Block takes a stand during Government Day at the Rhode Island State House, as Lisa Holley, Kate Trimble, Matt Jerzyk and Michael McCarthy listen.*



**LEADERSHIP**  
RHODE ISLAND

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 27:**

Leadership Rhode Island's Annual Open House, 5-8 pm, Candita Clayton Gallery, Hope Artiste Village, Pawtucket

**September 28:**

Deadline for Core Program applications for 2013 Iota II Class

**October 4:**

Public Occurrences Forum: Economic Leadership in RI: Who's responsible? 6 pm, Sapinsley Hall, Rhode Island College

**October 10:**

Public Occurrences Forum: The Jobs-Skills Gap in Rhode Island: How do we fix it? 6 pm, Sapinsley Hall, Rhode Island College

**October 18-20:**

Dine Central Falls weekend

**October 22:**

Public Occurrences Forum: Economic Development: Where does R.I. go from here? 6 pm, Sapinsley Hall, Rhode Island College

**October 25:**

Leadership Central Falls program begins

**October 26:**

Theta II Graduation/un-Masquerade Party, 5-9 pm, Hope Club, Providence

**December 7:**

College Leadership Rhode Island Commencement, State House

**January 10-11, 2013:**

Iota II Overnight Retreat at Alton Jones Campus

Do you want to know what's going on? Send your email address to [office@leadershipri.org](mailto:office@leadershipri.org) to get on our email list, check LRI's very active Facebook page or join our Twitter feed.

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