

PRESS RELEASE

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Group of Nonprofit Executives Complete United Way Learning Circle Program

For the past year, local leaders have focused on strengthening the delivery of services and building the capacity of Rhode Island's nonprofit sector

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND (Dec. 22, 2022) — Leaning into an innovative opportunity to better their organizations and in turn strengthen the ability of the state's nonprofit sector to serve Rhode Islanders, a group of 11 nonprofit leaders recently completed United Way's Executive Director Learning Circle program. The fellows spent a year in the program, and their achievement was celebrated on Dec. 16 during a gathering at United Way's Providence office.

"It is difficult out there right now for nonprofits as they wrestle with many of the same challenges as our small businesses, but also with tremendous demand for their services amid dwindling resources," said Roshni Darnal, United Way's director of community investments. "And at the same time, the organizations these leaders represent are better equipped today to continue their vital work. I am absolutely inspired by the commitment these professionals have to our community."

Over the course of twelve months, participants took part in a series of workshops that focused on strategic planning, fund development, risk management, board engagement, and more. One-on-one coaching allowed them to separately dive deeper into their own organizational specifics, while group efforts offered scenario sharing and practical experience with real-time challenges. Each program graduate may now apply their experience toward credits for an M.A. at Roger Williams University's School of Studies Community Development program.

"This program gave me something I felt was missing in other programs, and that was relatability," said Jonathan Goldman of Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice. "We understood what each other were talking about and going through, and that led to really unique learning and support. What I took from this experience will no doubt make a meaningful difference."

The Executive Director Learning Circle is facilitated by longtime nonprofit executive Michael Fournier and funded by United Way donors and a generous community investment grant from BankNewport. The eleven graduates and their respective organizations are:

- Angela Brunetti, [Charlestown Land Trust](#)
- Siobhan Callahan, [West Broadway Neighborhood Association](#)
- Caroline Gangji, [The Village Common of Rhode Island](#)
- Jonathan Goldman, [Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice](#)
- Bernard Georges, [New Bridges for Haitian Success](#)
- Kasha Hanflik, [Girls on the Run Rhode Island](#)
- Paula Hudson, [Better Lives Rhode Island](#)
- Amanda Parker, [The Burke Fund](#)
- Danielle Salisbury, [Warwick Center for the Arts](#)
- Christopher Samih-Rotondo, [Direct Action for Rights and Equality \(DARE\)](#)

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“BankNewport is proud to celebrate the 2022 cohort of nonprofit leaders to complete United Way’s Executive Director Learning Circle series,” stated Wendy E. Kagan, executive vice president, chief engagement officer for BankNewport. “Nonprofit executive directors are required to navigate so much — their organization’s financial strategy and management activities, leading their staff, inspiring donors, and telling their story. This series provides directors with valuable coaching, professional development, peer support, and technical assistance to further strengthen the mission of the nonprofits. We are honored to have the opportunity to provide some of the support needed to help them succeed.”

United Way first introduced the Executive Director Learning Circle in 2017. It was developed specifically for leaders of local nonprofits whose annual budgets are less than \$1 million. Its curriculum is rooted in capacity building and long-term sustainability.

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United Way of Rhode Island is uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders. A member of the world’s largest nonprofit network, we bring together individuals, businesses, nonprofits, community leaders, and government to tackle the root causes of inequity and achieve specific, measurable goals. Our programs include 211, the statewide front door connecting Rhode Islanders with social services, resources, and vital programs. Both directly and through grants to nonprofits, we are investing to build economic opportunity, advance childhood learning, expand philanthropy, and drive policy and participation. To learn more, visit unitedwayri.org, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Twitter](#).