



Press Release

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Junior League of Rhode Island Hosts Women's Leadership Roundtable
Moderated by DBR Director Elizabeth Tanner, Esq., panel of RI leaders to discuss women as catalysts for change on International Women's Day

WARWICK, R.I. – As part of a slate of events to celebrate the organization's 100th anniversary, The Junior League of Rhode Island (JLRI) hosted a Women's Leadership Roundtable Breakfast on Tuesday, March 8, which is International Women's Day.

More than 70 people attended the event, which featured a roundtable discussion moderated by Elizabeth Tanner, Esq., Director of the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation, about women as catalysts for lasting community change.

Tanner, a past member of JLRI, commented, "I am proud and inspired to be part of the JLRI's 100th Anniversary and celebration on International Women's Day. Having been a part of JLRI's history and now currently a governmental executive, my work aligns with JLRI's vision of women as catalysts for lasting community change. Congratulations JLRI!"

Panelists included Maria Kasparian, Executive Director, Edesia, Inc.; Barbara Papitto, founder and trustee of the Papitto Opportunity Connection; Patricia Raub, a founder of the Providence Community Library; and Vanessa Volz, Executive Director, Sojourner House.

"As we celebrate Women's History Month, discussions about how we can support and uplift women in our community are so important," said Barbara Papitto, founder and trustee of the Papitto Opportunity Connection. "At POC we work every day to identify, support and uplift women of color in Rhode Island and I'm glad the Junior League of Rhode Island is providing this opportunity to connect women leaders."

Panelists discussed barriers they had faced in their various fields, including “having to force the attention of men in the room” when working in male-dominated fields. They also talked about the skills that helped them succeed, and shared the advice they would give other women seeking to effect change: listen to yourself and the important issue you want to address. Believe that you can figure it out.”

“I feel strongly that women as volunteers can bring about lasting change in our communities,” noted Patricia Raub, a founder of the Providence Community Library. “It was through our concerted efforts as volunteers that the members of the Library Reform Group achieved our goal of keeping all nine of Providence's library branches open. We worked with neighborhood groups throughout the city, and, together, we succeeded.”

"To me, International Women’s Day is a day to acknowledge and celebrate women for their innumerable contributions to society,” said Maria Kasparian, Executive Director, Edesia, Inc. “At Edesia, our mission is to help treat and prevent malnutrition in vulnerable populations around the globe; our work is possible thanks to women all over the world who play a critically central role in nourishing their children, their families, and their communities.”

“I am honored to participate in JLRI's Women's Leadership Panel on International Women's Day. The day is an important reminder of how a committed, determined group of women can make a profound impact on their community,” said Vanessa Volz, Executive Director of Sojourner House, a nonprofit organization in Providence that has served thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

In addition to the panelists, nine women from JLRI’s “The Rhode Island 100” list of outstanding women attended the event, including Hilina Ajakaiye, Angie Ankoma, Ting Barnard, Tracy Baran, Barbara Van Sciver Crouchley, Carmela Geer, Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea, Lisa Guillette and Eva-Marie Mancuso.

“I’m thrilled that this event was such a success, and sparked a vigorous discussion about the many ways women are enacting meaningful change throughout their communities,” said Polly Talbott, President of JLRI. “As the Junior League of Rhode Island reflects upon its 100 years of empowering women through training and volunteer service, it is particularly meaningful to gather together on International Women’s Day and celebrate the amazing women who have given back so much to our communities!”

JLRI’s year of celebration will culminate in its Centennial Celebration on May 10, 2022 at the University Club in Providence. At the event, JLRI’s “The Rhode Island 100” list of outstanding women will be formally recognized.

About the Junior League of Rhode Island (JLRI)

The Junior League of Rhode Island, Inc. is committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. JLRI is a volunteer organization for women interested in making an impact in their community. Since 1921, more than 16,000 Rhode Island women have participated as members.

Over its one-hundred-year-history, more than 2.2 million hours of community service have been contributed, valued at over \$40 million, and The Junior League of Rhode Island has donated

more than \$1.5 million to over 250 community partners statewide. We are part of The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc., which is made up of 293 Junior Leagues in four countries. For more information about JLRI, please visit <http://www.jlri.org>.