



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 10, 2016

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BankRI Awards Grant to First Star URI Academy to Help Local Foster Youth Experience Post-Secondary Educational Opportunities

4-week Summer Residential program exposes high school students to college life through immersive experience at the University of Rhode Island's Kingston campus and taking classes

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Having just completed its fifth year, the First Star URI Academy has been lauded for the intensive, nurturing experiences it provides high school-aged foster youth across the state, helping them visualize and achieve the educational goals that mold a successful future. For students who participated in the program this summer, their housing, travel, food and supplies were supported by a \$2,000 grant from **Bank Rhode Island (BankRI)**. Additionally, BankRI hosted a group of First Star students at its Highland Avenue branch in East Providence on July 27, where youth had an opportunity to learn about careers in the banking industry and received backpacks full of school supplies.

According to research, just 50 percent of youth in foster care graduate from high school, while less than 3 percent graduate from college. Though the numbers are staggering, First Star URI Academy is working to change that trend locally. All of the seniors who participated in the program over the past two years successfully graduated high school on time. And, 100 percent of the students earned a B- or better for their college courses during the summer program, earning themselves between five and eight college credits.

During this year's program, students embarked on a four-week summer residential experience at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, living on campus, taking classes in math and English, and eating in the dining halls. Students also explored majors and career options, learned about the college application process, and received tutoring in SAT preparation and study skills. Best of all, the program doesn't end at the conclusion of the summer. First Star supports students through their high school career to ensure they graduate with the grades needed to enroll in college, providing them with ongoing mentoring and monthly group activities that include college campus tours, community service, and enrichment classes.

"Supporting the education of youth, particularly those who are considered at-risk, is one of the most important investments we can make as a business and as a community," said Mark J. Meiklejohn, President and CEO of BankRI. "Every student deserves the chance for a bright future—regardless of their circumstances—and First Star offers that hope by helping foster youth see college as an attainable option; this is a program we couldn't be more proud to support."

About Bank Rhode Island

Bank Rhode Island, a wholly owned subsidiary of Brookline Bancorp, Inc. (NASDAQ:BRKL), is a full-service, FDIC-insured financial institution headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island. The bank operates 19 branches and more than 55 ATMs throughout Providence, Kent and Washington Counties. For more information, visit www.BankRI.com. You can also find BankRI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BankRhodeIsland.

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