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BankRI Awards Grants to Providence Community Library

Funds will support workforce development classes provided through libraries across the capital city

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – As a way to help more Rhode Islanders develop the skills they need to enter and succeed in the workplace, **Bank Rhode Island (BankRI)** announced that it has awarded a \$2,500 grant to Providence Community Library. The funds will support the delivery of free workforce development programming, including both ESL and Spanish-language GED classes, taught at libraries throughout Providence.

Since July of 2009, Providence Community Library (PCL) has managed Providence’s nine neighborhood libraries, assuming administration from Providence Public Library, the nonprofit that had run the city’s library system since 1878, to avoid branch closures. In recent years, PCL has expanded its offerings with a focus on educational programs aimed at helping those from low-income households improve their career path and English-speaking capacity.

Understanding that nearly half of Providence’s population speaks a language other than English at home, PCL began offering ESL classes taught by dedicated volunteer teachers. Two semesters of ESL classes are taught each year, and this year, eight classes will be offered during each semester at seven different libraries. Each class runs for 12 weeks and features two volunteer teachers for each class.

Following the early success of these classes, PCL saw a need to conduct Spanish-language GED preparation classes. The first year these classes were held 12 students graduated from the nine-month program. By year three, demand increased to where PCL offered four classes, which saw 53 students graduate. Now thanks to BankRI’s support, PCL is able to further expand classes to accommodate 70 new students.

“At BankRI, we firmly believe that education is the most effective path out of poverty and into a life of self-sufficiency,” said Mark J. Meiklejohn, President and CEO of BankRI. “One of the many things that make our communities unique is the diversity we all share—it’s so important to help our neighbors develop the skills that make them better equipped to enter the workforce.”

For more information about PCL’s classes, which are currently scheduled through the end of May, please visit www.provcomlib.org/classes-training.

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 60 ATMs throughout Providence, Kent and Washington Counties. For more information, visit www.BANKRHODEISLAND.com.