

# Street Sights

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## WHERE IS THE OUTRAGE?

### THE LIGHTS ARE ON AT THE STATEHOUSE BUT WHO IS WORKING FOR OUR UNHOUSED FRIENDS?

The people in charge - elected officials and their appointees, just don't care about human life. There is no plan, no vision, no leadership, no direction, there is only death, despair and criminalization. *When will this madness end?*

"Providers are working without contracts, emergency hubs are not yet funded, and key members of the Housing Department were on vacation." - Steve Ahlquist

It's 2025 and the RI Housing Department still has no plans to house the homeless. REALLY. Read it again!!!

**Hey Governor, let's make our unhoused friends #1 priority in 2025!**

**CALL TO ACTION:** The 2025 Legislative Session starts on January 7. Contact your state representatives and senators today to **demand immediate action on homelessness**. If we really want to eliminate homelessness we all need to work together, speak up and **demand that Gov. McKee make ending homelessness a priority!** Call the State House (401-222-2983) or, if you want to get more involved, contact [streetsights@gmail.com](mailto:streetsights@gmail.com)



Advocates at the State House, 2007



Advocates at the State House, 2022



Frostbite from living outside, 2024



People living outside, 2023

Have you ever heard of the phrase "There but for the grace of God I go?" "These people," as you refer to them, are human beings! Who are you to judge them? The only difference between you and them is the circumstances. But, you FAIL to realize that being homeless could happen to you in the blink of an eye!

-Tracey Berube, Advocate

# DEDICATION TO RUTH “DIAMOND” MADSEN

We dedicate this issue of Street Sights to Ruth Madsen, lovingly known in the community as Diamond.

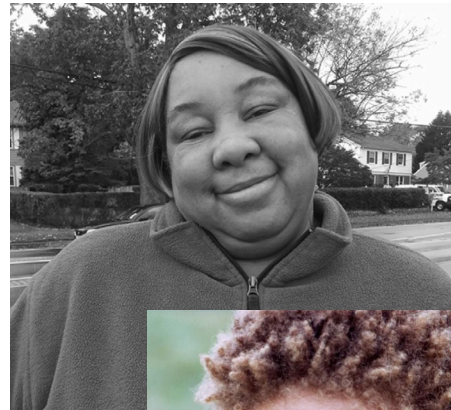
*“If I could save one person’s life, or give one person a smile every day, or let them hug me and tell me thank you, then that means more to me that a paycheck. Money is easily spent. Once it is spent its gone. You save someone’s life; they’re still here. It doesn’t matter how you save their life; you’ve saved their life for that day! Those things mean a lot to me.”*

We lost Diamond on December 18, 2024, only a few days after her 56th birthday. It was much too soon!

May we all remember Diamond’s fighting spirit, unwavering support for our friends in need, and fierce advocacy. This is a hard, hard fight, but Diamond never gave up, and never backed down.

We will miss you, dear friend.

Love always,  
Your Community



## OUR MISSION

Street Sights serves as a forum for advocates, homeless, and formerly homeless people, students, state officials, and the general public to share accurate and honest information about issues relating to homelessness. Our goal is to shed light on a subject not often addressed and, to some degree, ignored.

## Advertise with us!

Street Sights is the only homeless magazine and resource guide in Rhode Island. Your contribution will help our friends continue to receive updated information. If you have a business or organization and would like to advertise see our prices below (we offer multiple months discount). Please email streetsights@gmail.com or call us at 401-499-3596

Full page ad \$250 per month  
1/2 page ad \$150 per month

1/4 page ad \$100 per month  
business card \$40 Per month  
(Multiple months can receive a discount)

## SPONSOR

If you would like to sponsor an issue please contact us. We welcome donations of any amount. All donations and sponsorships are tax deductible.

## SUBSCRIBE

Individual subscriptions are available for \$30 per year. Issues are mailed out monthly. If you are interested please send a check made out to Street Sights to: 162 Orms Street, Providence RI 02908 or use our Paypal QR code above.

DONATE



We can not sustain an all volunteer paper any longer. Help keep Street Sights alive!

All charitable donations are tax deductible.

# RIHAP Advocates Hold Vigil to Remember Unhoused who Died

The Rhode Island Homeless Advocacy Project (RIHAP) and its supporters held a candlelight vigil on December 23, 2024 at the State House to honor those who have recently died while living outside, as well as those who are currently living unsheltered. Leaders of the religious community and individuals with lived experience of homelessness spoke at the vigil. Two weeks ago, R.J. died while sleeping overnight in a trailer. Last Wednesday, a beloved advocate, Ruth Madsen, lovingly known as Diamond, died prematurely due to the long-term health impacts of being unhoused.

RIHAP and allies call on Rhode Island Governor Daniel McKee, Providence Mayor Brett Smiley, and other municipal leaders to:

1. Governor McKee - **Declare a public health emergency** so we can treat this human crisis with the urgency it deserves!
2. Governor McKee - **Add additional year-round humane, high-quality shelter beds** with paths to permanent housing now to provide a roof over the heads of every Rhode Islander!
3. Mayor Smiley - **Open warm-**

**ing centers** when Real Feel temperatures are below freezing!

4. Mayor Smiley and other municipal leaders - **stop police raids of encampments** until residents have acceptable shelter or housing alternatives!

**To get more involved in advocacy to end homelessness:**

RIHAP meets at 12pm, Wednesdays at Mathewson Street Church, 134 Mathewson Street, Prov.

Contact Eric Hirsch for more information - ehirsch@providence.edu



Members of RIHAP at the Vigil at the State House on December 23. Photo courtesy of Steve Ahlquist.

**RI HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS:** In 2012, RI formally protect the rights of those experiencing homelessness through RI General Laws § 34-37.1-3. The Homeless Bill of Rights states you have the:

Right to use and **move freely in public spaces**, including, but not limited to, public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation and public buildings, in the same manner as any other person.

Right to **equal treatment by all state and municipal agencies**, including but not limited to, public libraries, police, RIPTA, EMS, city and town halls and the state house.

Right to **employment nondiscrimination** while seeking or maintaining employment due to the lack of permanent mailing address, mailing address being that of a shelter or social service provider, or because they know or think you to be experiencing homelessness.

Right to **emergency medical care** free from discrimination. You cannot be denied medical care or emer-

gency services because of your housing status. You have the right to be treated when you seek medical attention.

Right to **vote** at your local polling place, register to vote, and receive documentation necessary to prove identity for voting without discrimination because of your lack of address.

Right to **confidentiality** and protection from disclosure of records and information, including but not limited to: shelter sign-in lists, service provider records, waiting lists, and medical records without appropriate legal authority.

Right to a reasonable expectation of **privacy** (protected from search or seizure) of your personal belongings, such as a backpack or a tent, to the same extent as if you were in a house.

If you feel your rights have been violated go to [www.rihomeless.org/hbor](http://www.rihomeless.org/hbor) or email [info@rihomeless.org](mailto:info@rihomeless.org)

# NEW YEARS RESOLUTION: Consider Quitting Smoking

In Rhode Island, people who are unhoused smoke at higher rates than the general population. Around 68%-80% of unhoused individuals smoke, compared to only 14% of people in the general public. Smoking-related illnesses cause many deaths among homeless people, especially those who are 50 years old and older. For these individuals, smoking causes about 26% of their deaths. This makes it very important to find out how we can help unhoused people quit smoking.

It can be hard to focus on quitting smoking, but it is a lifesaving step. Even if you are not ready to quit right now, you can start looking into the resources there are out there. There are programs in Rhode Island that help people quit smoking.

**One place to start is the Rhode Island Nicotine Helpline (Quitline), which offers free phone counseling and nicotine replacement products like gum or patches. Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).**

There is no one right way to quit. It's normal for most people to be a little unsure when they consider quitting. When you find what works for you, without being told what to do or forced to quit a certain way, you are on the path to success. Tobacco treatment specialists have helped hundreds of people quit, by identifying what will work for you and supporting you in the choices you make as you move into action. How you quit matters. When you follow your own plan and stay comfortable you are more likely to quit, and, more importantly, stay quit for good!

**HARD, YES.  
IMPOSSIBLE, NO.**

Insured or uninsured, trying to quit or helping a smoker quit, we can help. Read on.



**1-800-QUITNOW  
1-800-784-8669**

## RIPTA NEWS

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) **has a new CEO, Christopher Durand**, who was interim CEO for the past eight months. Durand, had been RIPTA's chief financial officer before that. "RIPTA's my home," Durand said. "It's something special."

Randall Rose, of the Kennedy Plaza Resilience Coalition and RI Transit Riders, said "Bus riders and advocacy groups were calling for a long time for him to be chosen as the current CEO and I think our voices made a difference and its an improvement here," he said.

The agency is also finalizing plans for its new downtown transit hub. RIPTA is looking at two locations close to the Providence train station. The new building would offer larger indoor waiting areas, expanded restrooms, digital screens to track bus arrivals and departures, and WiFi.

**DID YOU KNOW YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET A 2 YEAR BUS PASS?** RIPTA offers certain low-income seniors (age 65+) and low-income persons with disabilities a free bus pass. This is what you need to apply:

**1. Proof of Identity** such as: Driver's License, State ID, Passport, Veterans ID card.

**2. Proof of Low Income Status** such as: proof of SNAP benefits; a Medicaid Card (issued within the last year) or Medicaid Eligibility Notice Letter (most recent year); an SSI Award Letter; an IRS Tax Account Transcript (most recent year; see below for directions on obtaining a tax transcript); or a Supplemental Income Verification Notice from the Rhode Island's Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

**3. Proof of Senior OR Disability Status:**

Senior Status (65 or older) one of the

following: Medicare card, R.I. Driver's License, Passport, R.I. State ID Card, Green Card/Citizenship Papers

**OR**

Disability Status such as: SSDI or SSI letter, VA Disability, with disability rating of 40% or above, OR a Medical Affidavit Form - verification of your disability from a qualified professional with first-hand knowledge of your disability

**4. Application Fee:** \$10 fee, which covers the pass for 2 years. After 2 years you have to re-apply and pay the \$10 fee again. RIPTA charges \$20 to replace a lost or damaged bus pass.

Find more information, applications and medical affidavit at [www.ripta.com/reducedfare/](http://www.ripta.com/reducedfare/) or visit the RIPTA Card office at Kennedy Plaza on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday from 8am-4pm (closed 12pm-1pm for lunch).

# Do's and Don'ts of Supporting our Homeless Community

DO	DON'T
Understand that there are many paths to homelessness and everyone's circumstances are different.	Assume you know why someone is unhoused.
Ask someone what they need at that moment and listen actively. Offer practical assistance when appropriate.	Assume that you know what someone needs.
Develop trust; treat people with dignity and respect.	Kneel or sit down next to someone without asking permission. Don't make someone feel trapped by hovering over them.
Be patient and offer a no judgement zone.	Forget that this person is someone's son or daughter.
Connect with local service providers who have trained outreach workers.	Go into encampments or approach people's tents.

**These are just a few ideas. If you have any additional suggestions, please send them to [streetsights@gmail.com](mailto:streetsights@gmail.com)**

## John Chiellini: From Homeless to Community Health Worker

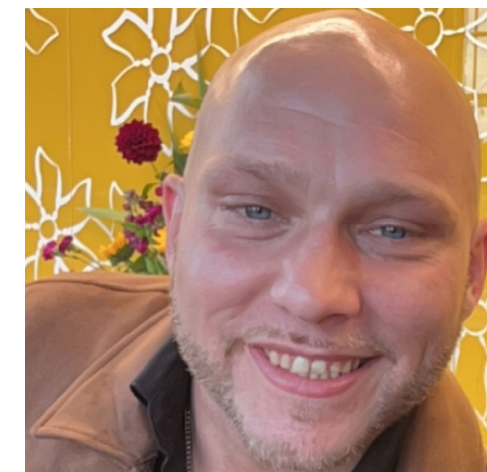
My name is John Chiellini and this is my story.

In April 2020 I was released from federal prison after 13 years with nothing but the clothes on my back and at the height of the Covid pandemic! Lacking any direction or the means to survive, I resorted back to the life of ripping and running, which is exactly what put me in prison to begin with. After 8 months of living in a storage unit and on the streets, relying on drugs to mask my childhood trauma, I had reached my breaking point and I knew I was heading to jail or death, neither of which appealed to me. **Hanging out at Kennedy Plaza I heard about an organization called Better Lives RI.** Not knowing much about them other than their phone number I reached out. At that time, I didn't realize the person on the other end of the phone would wind up being my savior. Her name is Amy. Only asking how she could help me, my emotions immediately began pouring out and I could barely speak. After sev-

eral meetings, we discussed the path I had been on previously and where it led me and what I needed to do to achieve the life that I wanted. **She helped me identify my dreams and goals and together we worked on a plan to accomplish them.** Becoming sober was my first goal because that was the catalyst for a life of crime and eventually prison. Living on the streets takes a toll on your body and mind and the drugs and alcohol help dull the pain you feel every day. You learn very quickly to rely on them as a crutch to get you through the next few days or hours.

Over the next year I attained my sobriety and began volunteering with BLRI. The BLRI staff boosted my confidence. Over time this gave me the confidence I lacked due to the trauma I experienced. Without the help and encouragement of this organization, I would have continued down the dead end road. Better Lives saved me, by exposing the man suppressed under all the trauma. The man I was meant to be.

**Today I am housed, I have my Community Health Worker designation and am working full time for Boston based wellness agency, BosWell, as a Community Health Worker.** I am happier now than I have ever been in my life. I know in my heart I could not have attained all of this without the help of BLRI! To my friends on the street I say, If I can do it, you can do it! Believe in yourself.



# SPOTLIGHT: MATHEWSON STREET CHURCH



Founded in 1848, Mathewson Street United Methodist Church is the oldest surviving Methodist Church in Providence.

Mathewson Street Church supports the unhoused community in the Providence area in many ways, first of which is meeting our friends with warmth and compassion, and providing a space to build community and fellowship. In addition, we provide warm meals, restrooms, clothing, personal hygiene products, and open space to talk with friends, charge your phone or just rest.

Hours: Church office, restrooms, Fellowship Hall are open Mon., Wed., Thurs., Sat. 9 a.m.- 2 p.m. Breakfast is served from 9-9:30 and Lunch is 12-12:30.

Friendship Breakfast every Sunday 7-9 a.m. Meal is served around 8 a.m.

Sunday Service: 10 a.m. in the 2nd floor sanctuary.

The Out to Lunch Bunch AA meeting Tues., Wed. and Thurs., 12-1 PM

Better Lives RI meal at Mathewson Street Church: Fridays from 3-5pm

#### Contact:

Kevin Simon, Director of Outreach  
134 Mathewson St., Prov., RI 02903  
401-331-8900  
mathewsonstreetumc@gmail.com  
www.mathewsonstreetchurch.com

We greatly appreciate donations of men's and women's clothing, hygiene products, snacks, handwarmers, etc.

## Hope for Providence: Bringing Positive Change by Giving the People a Voice

Street Sights sat down with Aaron Ferro to learn about his vision for Hope for Providence and we are excited to partner with them because we believe story telling is a powerful way for our unhoused to express themselves. Hope For Providence, is dedicated to addressing mutual community challenges by harnessing the transformative power of storytelling. Through authentic narratives and collaborative engagement, we aim to inspire solutions, empower individuals, and strengthen our community for a brighter future.

#### What Do We Do?

We are a non-profit that produces free media and exposure to local non-profits that align with our core values; which are, providing food, shelter and resources for the unhoused, addressing and creating solutions for those struggling with mental health issues, building stronger communities

(which includes education) and the improvement of the local infrastructure.

#### What is our goal?

We are creating a captivating documentary series that showcases the rich diversity and profound depth of Providence. Through intimate, personal storytelling, we aim to illuminate the real experiences of its residents, highlighting their values, challenges, and aspirations. This project seeks to build a bridge of understanding and empathy among viewers, empowering the community by elevating their voices and unique stories. By fostering a deeper connection between the city's past, present, and future hopes, we strive to inspire action, promote social cohesion, and celebrate the indomitable spirit of Providence.

Find us: [instagram.com/hopeforprovidence/](https://www.instagram.com/hopeforprovidence/)



Aaron Ferro, Co-Founder



Jakob Moore, Co-Founder

# POETRY WALL

## The Sadness of Loss

by James Wallace

The sadness of loss, the loneliness that seeks  
To be alone dares not cast a glance lest streaks  
Of light seek to coerce her from the concrete  
Tomb where she has chosen to suffer her defeat  
Or victory but the final end is always an unknown  
She's been here so many times, the seed has sown  
And taken root in how she defines life, love, joy  
For there was no one there to teach her she's not a toy  
And her heart had lain shattered before but to learn  
The reason why she could not comprehend nor turn  
To another for there was no one there and she sat  
Weeping tears of sadness and pain unto the sand  
Of the arena where fate decides it all...  
She sat and gazed out unto the world, a mere peek  
Lest the light shatter the beauty of that she seeks  
In the comforting shroud of darkness she has found..  
But danger lurks there for the adrenaline of the  
sound  
Of weeping, sadness and despair become a mind  
Altering state like a drug, a chain to bind  
Her forever to never finding love or life in a state  
Of bliss, joy and love she'd ne're known...  
One sad morn she sat looking unto freedom,  
The definition unknown, but strong was her desire  
To see beyond despair and she leaned unto the light  
And for one moment she saw the beauty of the sight  
She sat crying tears of joy and the once wayward  
Girl stood as a lady with smile on her face and she  
In her rags was never seen again in the darkness  
Of the streets or the rags of despair...

## \*\*TO: A Soul Unseen\*\*

By Raw Diamond

Do you know the crime  
That brings a homeless soul to mime  
When a heart bleeds  
And none can hear their needs  
  
With a stomach to growl  
And hungry eyes begin to prowl  
Begging for mercy with empty hands  
But in a world of consumerism none  
understands  
  
So the stomach pangs  
And against the flesh the pains gangs  
And the easiest way to escape this hell  
Is to be inebriated to the point of a shell  
  
But the stench of stupor is a constant  
reminder  
As the longings of loss in a broken heart a  
constant finder  
Hence for most there is no way out  
In a silent world when they scream and shout  
  
To a pain that goes numb  
To a mouth that goes dumb  
To a soul unseen  
As though in this life they've never been

Have a poem you'd like to see in Street Sights?  
Email it to: [streetsights@gmail.com](mailto:streetsights@gmail.com)

# RHODE ISLAND MEAL SITES

BE SURE TO CALL IN ADVANCE FOR INFORMATION AS SOME THINGS ON THIS LIST MAY BE OUT OF DATE.

## PAWTUCKET:

**Pawtucket Soup Kitchen**  
195 Walcott Street (401) 258-4616

Breakfast M-F 7:15-8:00am  
Dinner M-F 4:45-5:30 pm  
Saturday Brunch 10:15 - 11:00 a.m.  
Lunch M-F Downtown Pawtucket  
across from Visitor's Center - 11:30 am  
and Collyer Park - 11:50 am

## WOONSOCKET:

**New Beginnings**  
24 Hamlet Ave (401) 356-4066

Lunch Monday - Thursday  
11:30 am - 12:45 pm

Breakfast M-F 7:15-8:00am

## NEWPORT:

### MLK Center

20 Dr Marcus Wheatland Blvd  
(401)272-0220

Breakfast Mon-Fri 7:30-8:30am

## PROVIDENCE:

**Amos House**  
460 Pine Street , Prov. (401) 272-0220

Breakfast M-F 7:00-8:00am  
Lunch M-F 11:00-12:30, Saturday 11:00-  
12:00pm (closed first Saturday of the  
month)

**Church of the Master Meal Site**  
15 Valley Street (401) 861-5568

Breakfast Saturday 9:00-10:00am

**Mathewson Street Church**  
134 Mathewson Street, (401) 331-8900

Breakfast M, W, Th, Sat 9-10:00am and  
Sunday 8:00-9:00am  
Lunch M, W, Th, Sat 11:30am-12:30pm  
Dinner Friday 3:30-5:00pm (hosted by  
Better Lives Rhode Island)

**McAuley House**  
622 Elmwood Ave, Prov. (401) 941-9013

Breakfast Mon - Fri 8 AM - 9:30 AM  
Lunch Mon-Fri 11:15 AM - 1 PM

**Providence Rescue Mission**  
627 Cranston St, Prov. (401) 274-8861  
Dinner Mon-Sun 5:00pm

**St. Edward Food & Wellness Center**  
1001 Branch Avenue, Prov (401) 600-  
1935

Lunch Saturday 12:00-1:30pm

**St. Charles Soup Kitchen**  
178 Dexter Street, Prov (401) 946-5586

Dinner Thursday 4:15-6:00pm

**St. Patricks Church**  
244 Smith Street (401) 421-7070

Dinner Monday 4:00-5:00pm

## EAST PROVIDENCE:

**Good Neighbors**  
55 Turner Ave (401)

Lunch Mon-Thurs. 11:00am-1:00pm and  
Friday 9:30am-1:00pm

**The Rhode Island Community Food Bank supports 147 emergency food organizations around the state. Use your phone to scan the the QR code below to access a directory of all the emergency food providers in the state. Or visit the website: [rifoodbank.org/find-food/](http://rifoodbank.org/find-food/)**

**The Food Bank information is updated every month - open your camera and hold it up to the QR code it will pop up and then press to access the information.**

