



**Dear Members of the DD Community,**

I wanted to take a moment to once again acknowledge the DD community during this holiday season. Whether you are a person with a disability, a family member or part of the provider, advocate or state support community, we share a common bond of desiring the best outcomes for individuals with I/DD. This year has been one that we will not soon forget. As we look forward to moving beyond the pandemic in 2021, I would like to thank those who risked their health and safety to provide support to those in need of DD services. Without direct support staff, family members, SLA providers, and many others who worked many hours beyond their normal routines to ensure that needs were met, we would not have been able to get through the crisis. You are true heroes and are to be commended for your dedication and compassion. I would also like to thank everyone we serve for adapting so courageously to changed routines and reduced access to work and community programs. You have been amazing and we thank you for your strength and determination.

I wish all of you the best holiday possible and look forward, with you, to brighter times to come in the New Year.

*Kevin*

Kevin Savage  
Acting Director of DD Services

**Please note:  
We're taking  
a short break.  
The next issue  
of DD News will  
be in January.**

**Happy & Healthy  
Holidays!**



image: Freepik.com

# **COVID Vaccination Has Started in Rhode Island**

*From Governor's Communication, 12/14/20*

**Today is a turning point for Rhode Island and for our country in the fight against COVID-19.**

At 1 p.m., the state's first COVID-19 vaccine was administered to Dr. Christian Arbelaez. Dr. Arbelaez is a Colombian immigrant, the son of a housekeeper, and a first-generation college graduate. He did his residency at Brown University and has been working throughout this pandemic on the frontlines in the emergency room at Rhode Island Hospital.

After receiving the vaccine, Dr. Arbelaez shared how excited and thankful he is for this moment in our pandemic response, saying, "As a person of color, as a Colombian, as a Latino, as a doctor, I want to share this message with my colleagues and the communities of color. I want to ask you to please get the vaccine so you can keep yourself and your family healthy. We will stop the spread in our communities if you get vaccinated."

We still have a long way to go before distributing this life-saving vaccine to everyone in Rhode Island, but this is a historic step toward defeating COVID-19. Our healthcare workers have been working around-the-clock to keep us safe from this virus, and we should all be heartened to know that they will be protected in-turn.

It will still be a few months before the vaccine is widely available, but today's vaccinations are a major turning point. You can read more about the vaccine, including our distribution plan, at [health.ri.gov/covid/vaccine](https://health.ri.gov/covid/vaccine) [[r20.rs6.net](https://r20.rs6.net)].

We're all in this together.  
Gina Raimondo, Governor

## **Who will get the vaccine once it is available?**

We expect to receive limited initial supplies of vaccine. At first, the vaccine will likely only be available for people most at risk for COVID-19. A special subcommittee of Rhode Island's Vaccine Advisory Committee will also advise on how to prioritize distribution of vaccine. This subcommittee has [recommended](#) that high-risk healthcare workers be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as vaccine arrives in Rhode Island. Initial shipments from vaccine manufacturers will be arriving on December 14 and December 15 to Kent Hospital, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital (and Hasbro Children's Hospital), Women & Infants Hospital, and The Miriam Hospital. Approximately 1,000 first doses are going to each facility. Our goal is to make sure this is done equitably, in a way that protects the State as a whole. We are planning to roll out vaccine in phases to more groups of people as more doses become available. You can learn more about the COVID-19 Vaccine Subcommittee and our vaccination plan here: <https://health.ri.gov/covid/vaccine/>.

## **What can we do while we wait for a vaccine?**

There are prevention measures that we know work. While waiting for a vaccine, please continue to wear a mask, wash your hands, watch your distance, and stay home if you're feeling sick or if you have symptoms of COVID-19. It is important to continue these practices even after you receive the vaccine. We are still learning about how effective the vaccines are and for how long they are effective.

**For more information, visit the [RI COVID Vaccination web page](#).**



# KINDNESS CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2020



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 <b>7</b> Leave a positive message for someone else to find	<b>1</b> Share the Kindness Calendar with others and spread kindness	<b>2</b> Contact someone you can't be with to see how they are	<b>3</b> Offer to help someone who is facing difficulties at the moment	<b>4</b> Give kind comments to as many people as possible today	<b>5</b> Make a gift for someone who is homeless or feeling lonely	<b>6</b> Support a charity, cause or campaign you really care about
<b>14</b> Share a happy memory or inspiring thought with a loved one	<b>8</b> Do something helpful for a friend or family member	<b>9</b> Notice when you're hard on yourself or others and be kind instead	<b>10</b> Listen wholeheartedly to others without judging them	<b>11</b> Be generous. Feed someone with food, love or kindness today	<b>12</b> Buy an extra item and donate it to a local food bank	<b>13</b> See how many different people you can smile at today
<b>21</b> Appreciate kindness and thank people who do things for you	<b>15</b> Contact an elderly neighbour and brighten up their day	<b>16</b> Look for something positive to say to everyone you speak to	<b>17</b> Practice gratitude. List the kind things others have done for you	<b>18</b> Give away something that you have been holding on to	<b>19</b> Buy locally and support independent shops near you	<b>20</b> Contact someone who may be alone or feeling isolated
<b>28</b> Be kind to the planet. Eat less meat and use less energy	<b>22</b> Congratulate someone for an achievement that may go unnoticed	<b>23</b> Choose to give or receive the gift of forgiveness	<b>24</b> Bring joy to others. Share something which made you laugh	<b>25</b> Treat everyone with kindness today, including yourself!	<b>26</b> Get outside. Pick up litter or do something kind for nature	<b>27</b> Call a relative who is far away to say hello and have a chat
	<b>29</b> Turn off digital devices and really listen to people	<b>30</b> Let someone know how much you appreciate them and why	<b>31</b> Plan some new acts of kindness to do in 2021			

Let's look beyond our differences and help each other. Every act of kindness matters



## ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

#DoGoodDecember

[www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)

Learn more about this month's theme at [www.actionforhappiness.org/do-good-december](http://www.actionforhappiness.org/do-good-december)

Keep Calm · Stay Wise · Be Kind



## Upcoming Days to Celebrate

Every day should be celebrated. Here are some of the world's weird, funny, wonderful, unknown and bizarre holidays coming up. Check out [Days Of The Year](#) or [National Today](#) for more.



**Sunday, Dec. 20, 2020**  
Games Day

What kind of games do you most enjoy, board games, card games, or maybe video games? Whatever game is your favorite, **Games Day** is the day to play it and have some fun! As generation upon generation of people the world over would agree, playing games is a great way to just kick back, relax, and have some fun with your family or friends.

For many people, Christmas can be an incredibly stressful time of year. **Humbug Day** encourages a controlled venting of all that stress before Christmas so that you can enjoy the festive season to the fullest. After venting, you can also celebrate **Look On The Bright Side Day**. It's quite normal to feel a little down on this day since it falls around the winter solstice, which means things tend to get a little cold and cloudy outside. But, fret not, because every cloud has a silver lining. Being optimistic is scientifically good for our bodies and minds. Look On The Bright Side Day is all about seeing the glass as half full!



**Monday, Dec. 21, 2020**  
Humbug Day / Look on the Bright Side Day



**Saturday, Dec. 26th, 2020**  
Thank You Note Day

To celebrate **Thank You Note Day** all we have to do is pass around cards or notes thanking our family members and friends for the gifts that they've given us and the love we all share each and every day. Thank You Note Day is a silly, yet wonderful little holiday that makes time with our friends and families a whole lot more cheerful, fun, and all around happy.

**National Call a Friend Day** reminds us all to take a few minutes, pick up the phone, and call that friend you've been meaning to get back in touch with.



**Monday, Dec. 28, 2020**  
National Call a Friend Day



**Sunday, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**  
Festival of Sleep Day

**The Festival of Sleep Day** was encouraged so that people could enjoy some relaxation and much-needed "shut-eye" after the holiday period. The Festival of Sleep Day ensures that you have all of the time that you need to recoup and recover from the holiday season. Nobody is quite sure when this holiday started, but it was founded by someone who had a profound and deep love of sleep.

## Practicing Gratitude Works

Practicing gratefulness may be the best kept secret to help reduce stress and feel better. Practicing gratitude everyday can have a significant benefit to our physical and emotional wellbeing.

### **Ideas for Practicing Gratitude**

- Think about why you are grateful for you. Be kind to yourself by being thankful for making it through a difficult year, even if you weren't able to accomplish everything you wanted to.
- Write a letter to a friend or call someone and tell them you are grateful for them and why.
- Think of someone who did something or said something that changed your life for the better; Someone you never properly thanked; someone you may not have thought about or seen for a while. Write a letter of gratitude to this person.
- Do a favor for someone you are grateful for, or if you can, consider volunteering. Leave a meal, a plant or a card on a friend's doorstep. Consider volunteering for an organization or activity where you can help others, while safely distancing and wearing masks.
- Write a letter to a frontline hero. Send a letter to a hero serving on the frontlines of the COVID pandemic (at your local hospital, nursing home, school or grocery store) or in the military, either [via email](#) or [electronically](#).
- Start a Gratitude Journal. Once a week, give yourself 10-15 minutes and write down people, places, objects, memories, or events you're grateful for. Or try this [gratefulness app](#).

### Operation Gratitude



[Operation Gratitude](#) has delivered more than 2.9 million Care Packages filled with items donated by grateful Americans and service-friendly companies that want to express their support for Heroes serving overseas and here at home. Together we are working to bridge the civilian-service divide. Packages are sent to deployed troops, first responders, veterans, wounded heroes and caregivers, and military families.

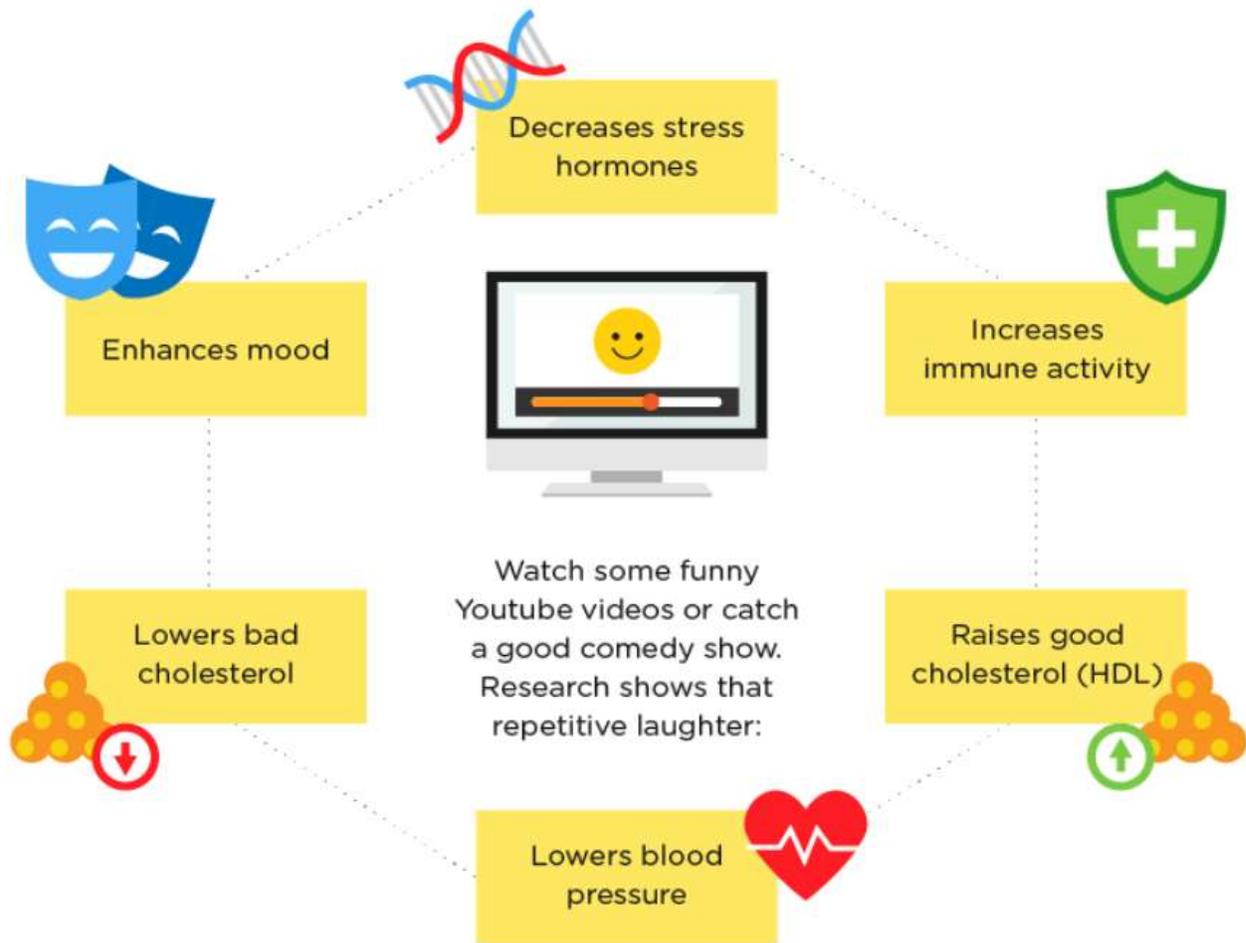
In March, Operation Gratitude launched one of the largest coordinated efforts in the country to support the brave men and women on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Companies across the nation joined together to leverage their collective resources to provide direct support to Frontline Responders nationwide, forming the [Coalition to Support COVID-19 Frontline Responders](#).

Since March 22nd, Operation Gratitude and Coalition Partners have shipped Jumbo Care Packages to over 250,000 Frontline Responders in hospitals, police stations, and fire departments across the nation. As well as National Guard units that have activated in support of COVID-19 and Deployed Troops serving overseas.



Operation Gratitude is also providing ways individuals, groups and businesses can give back from their own homes. The **#VirtualVolunteerism** campaign will allow every American the opportunity to support Deployed Troops, National Guardsmen, First Responders, and Emergency Medical Personnel on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteer virtually [as an individual](#) or [as a group](#).

## Laugh for Your Health



## Window Swap

Let's face it. We are all stuck indoors. And it's going to be a while till we travel again.

Window Swap is here to fill that deep void in our wanderlust hearts by allowing us to look through someone else's window, somewhere in the world, for a while.

It's a place on the internet where we can share our 'window views' to help each other feel a little bit better till we can (responsibly) explore our beautiful planet again.

Let's travel without moving for now. Let's [window swap](#).

You can also upload your own video of the view outside your window. Find instructions [here](#).

Open a new window somewhere in the world →

## A Spectacularly Rare ‘Christmas Star’ Is Coming In December As Two Worlds Align After Sunset

Excerpted from an article by Jamie Carter, [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)

The Solar System’s two largest planets are now really, really close to each other, and on December 21, 2020—the date of the December solstice—they’re going to almost appear to collide to become one super-bright point of light.

Jupiter and Saturn will look like a “double planet” for first time since Middle Ages.

In reality, of course, they won’t be close at all. Think about the distance from the Earth to the Sun. That’s what astronomers call an *astronomical unit* (au), and it’s how they measure distances in the vastness of the Solar System. Jupiter is 5 *au* from us. Saturn is 10 *au*.

“You’d have to go all the way back to just before dawn on March 4, 1226, to see a closer alignment between these objects visible in the night sky.”

It’s thought by some—including legendary German astronomer Johannes Kepler—that the “star of Bethlehem” in the story of the Magi or “three wise men” could have been a rare triple conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn and Venus.

The rare celestial event will be observable anywhere on Earth where skies are clear. The planets will appear low in the western sky for about an hour after sunset as viewed from the northern hemisphere, and though they’ll be closest on December 21, 2020, you can look each evening that week.

Although the sight will be sinking towards the horizon, it will be bright enough to be viewed in twilight. All you need is an unobstructed view to the southwest, and to look to the southwest from about 45 minutes after sunset where you are.

For telescope viewers, on December 21, 2020, each planet and several of their largest moons will be visible in the same field of view that evening.

A “great conjunction” this close won’t happen again until March 15, 2080.

*Wishing you clear skies and wide eyes.*



*Jupiter and Saturn will appear closer together in Earth’s night sky than they have been since the Middle Ages. GETTY*

## This Is The Highest Resolution Snowflake Photo Ever

Excerpted from article by John Koetsier, [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)



Why would former Microsoft chief technology officer Nathan Myhrvold spend a year and a half building a custom 100-megapixel carbon-fiber super-cooled sapphire-lensed LED-lit super camera to take pictures of snowflakes? Because he can. Because he wanted to. And ... because snowflakes are much more important than we give them credit for. But most likely, just because it's cool.

"Snowflakes are something that we don't think of as food, yet most of us in North America anyway, spend our whole summer drinking melted snowflakes, right?" Nathan Myhrvold said on a recent episode of the TechFirst podcast

([Listen to the podcast here](#) or [watch it here](#)). "Without snowflakes, we would have no water."

It turns out that taking pictures of snowflakes is hard. Really hard. Sure, there's the obvious problem: melting. Plus, they're small, they're largely transparent, and the kind of light that you typically use to photograph things would actually melt them into an unappealing mush. Just to make the whole snowflake photography enterprise more fun, the best weather for finding and photographing them is a fairly frigid minus 15 to 20 Fahrenheit.

So Myhrvold had to invent a camera system that connects to a microscope that can photograph his short-lived fleeting subjects. All that he needed was snowflakes. That was also a challenge. Solution?



Fly up to Alaska, and fly up to northern Canada. The result of all that effort is a few perfect pictures, captured in perhaps 200, 300, or even 500 stacked frames of 100 megapixels: the highest resolution snowflake photographs ever captured.

What's next? Possibly 3D. Myhrvold says he may add a Fanbeam laser that can measure very fine differences in distance, much like a LIDAR sensor in a self-driving car, so that he can 3D print meter-sized versions for each snowflake. That would result in roughly three-foot wide perfect replicas of snowflakes: a potentially spectacular addition to

most people's home or office decor, particularly around Christmas time.

"I'm curious about things," Myhrvold told me. "So I'm curious about finding things out, and trying to understand something that people don't. Or trying to understand something that I don't, you know, acquisition of a new skill, like learning how to deal with these snowflakes ... well, that's a learning thing."

Which sounds like a great driving motivation for education in general. And the catalyst for an endless series of quests for knowledge ... like the next project: a giant multi-gigapixel mosaic of the Milky Way.



## If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, BH Link is here for you

BH Link's mission is to ensure all Rhode Islanders experiencing mental health and substance use crises receive the appropriate services they need as quickly as possible in an environment that supports their recovery. Call 911 if there is risk of immediate danger. Visit the BH Link website at [www.bhlink.org](http://www.bhlink.org) or for confidential support and to get connected to care:

CALL (401) 414-LINK (5465)

If under 18 CALL: (855) KID(543)-LINK(5465)

Visit the 24-HOUR/7-DAY TRIAGE CENTER at 975 Waterman Avenue, East Providence, RI

## Stay Informed with Information on COVID-19

### Rhode Island Department of Health COVID-19 Resources

Hotline (401) 222-8022 or 211 after hours;  
Email [RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov)  
Website <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>

### Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information

Website [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)  
Videos <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/videos.html>  
*Includes a link to ASL videos*

### BHDDH Information on COVID-19's Impact on DD Services and the DD Community

Website [bhddh.ri.gov/COVID](http://bhddh.ri.gov/COVID)

### RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN)

Website <https://ripin.org/covid-19-resources/>  
Call Center (401) 270-0101 or email [callcenter@ripin.org](mailto:callcenter@ripin.org)

### Advocates in Action – for videos and easy to read materials

Website <https://www.advocatesinaction.org/>  
*Website offers BrowseAloud, which will read the website to you*

## Sign Up for Our Email List

If you aren't receiving email updates and newsletters from BHDDH, you can sign up on our website. From the main BHDDH page at [bhddh.ri.gov](http://bhddh.ri.gov), select **What's New**, then go to bottom and click on **DD Community Newsletter**. The link to sign up for the BHDDH Newsletter is directly below the title, as shown in the picture at right.



DD Community Newsletter  
[SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER](#)

## Contacting DD Staff

DDD has put extended hour phone coverage in place with a central business hour phone number and an on-call number for nights and weekends.

If you have a vital need, please call the numbers on the next page. If you have any general questions or concerns, please email them if you can, in order to try to leave the phone lines free for those who need to call. We will do our best to address your questions directly or through future newsletters.

**401-462-3421**

**WEEKDAYS DURING BUSINESS HOURS FOR:**

- VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS
- QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR DD SERVICES

During business hours  
(Monday-Friday 8:30-4:00),  
for questions or support  
**(401) 462-3421**  
Para español, llame  
**(401) 462-3014**

**401-265-7461**

**AFTER HOURS ON WEEKDAYS FOR:**

- VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS

For emerging or imminent care  
related questions,  
Mon - Fri 4pm-10pm and  
weekends 8:30am-10pm  
**(401) 265-7461**

**401-265-7461**

**ON WEEKENDS FOR:**

- VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Send general questions to the  
AskDD email address. Please  
do not email critical issues.  
[BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov)

**E-MAIL THE DIVISION**

**BHDDH AskDD @BHDDH.RI.GOV**

**HELP US KEEP THE PHONE LINES OPEN FOR THOSE WHO ARE CALLING WITH A VITAL NEED!**

**WHEN POSSIBLE, PLEASE SEND AN E-MAIL FOR:**

- NON-CRITICAL CONCERNS about Your Services and Supports
- GENERAL QUESTIONS about Your Services or the RI DD System

**FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES  
CALL 911  
RIGHT AWAY. DON'T WAIT!**

For medical or  
healthcare related  
emergencies, call  
your Primary Care  
Physician or 911

**CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR**

**CALL FOR:**

- ROUTINE Healthcare Questions
- NON-EMERGENCY Medical Care

**FOLLOW YOUR DOCTOR'S ADVICE  
DON'T go to their office  
unless they tell you to!**

# Care for yourself one small way each day

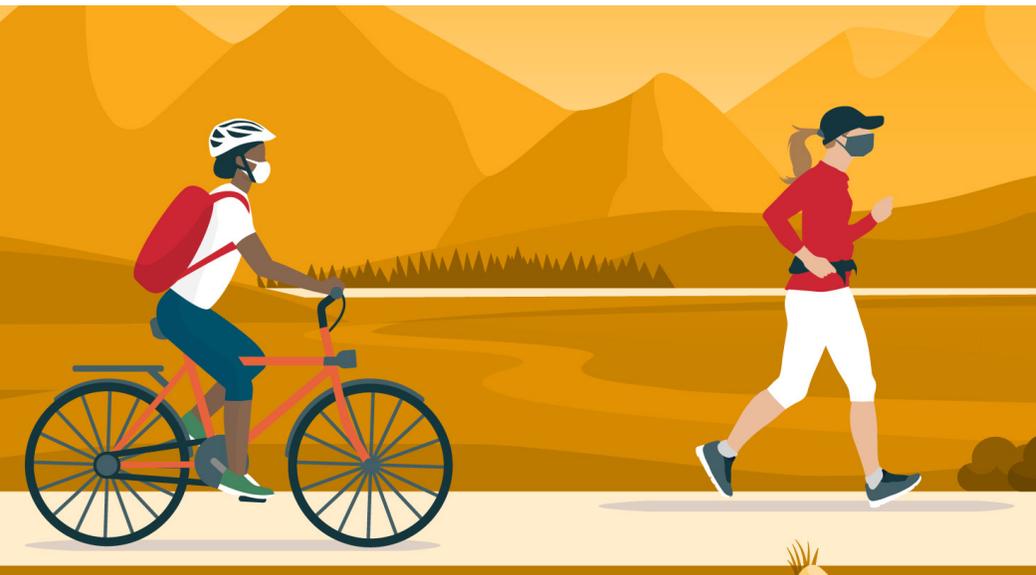
Find new ways to safely connect with family and friends, get support, and share feelings



Take breaks to relax and unwind through yoga, music, gardening, or new hobbies



Treat yourself to healthy foods and get enough sleep



Take care of your body and get moving to lessen fatigue, anxiety, or sadness



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

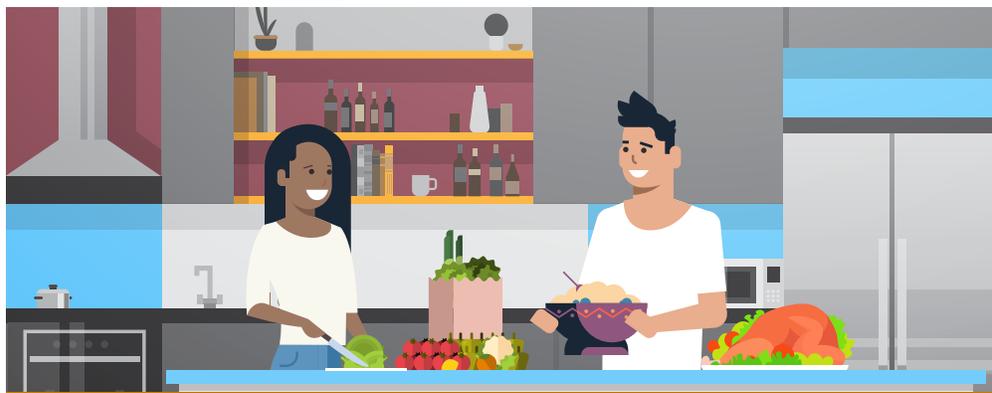
# This holiday season do what's best for you and your loved ones

Being away from family and friends during the holidays can be hard.



When you talk with your friends and family about plans, it's ok if you decide to stay home and remain apart from others.

Hard choices to be apart this year may mean that you can spend many more years with your loved ones.



Doing what's best for you includes eating healthy foods and getting enough sleep.

Do what is best for your health and the health of your loved ones. This year spend time with those in your own household.



Make time to take care of your body and stay active to lessen fatigue, anxiety, and sadness.



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Disaster Distress Hotline: Call or text 1-800-985-5990

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

## **Support Small Businesses**

Small businesses are the foundation for RI's economy. People with disabilities also own businesses throughout Rhode Island.

A number of people with disabilities have participated in a Business Development Series administered by the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC). The project is funded by the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) with the primary purpose to develop a "Self-Employment Business Incubator", where people with disabilities can learn various skills to help them grow successful businesses, access technical assistance through Business Specialists, and apply for mini-grants to purchase materials, supplies and equipment they need.

Following are profiles of local small businesses that have benefited from the Self-Employment Business Incubator. Help support these individuals by checking out their Websites or Facebook pages and purchasing some of their products and unique items for the upcoming holiday season!

The next round of classes start in late January 2021. For more information contact Sue Babin, Project Director, RIDDC, at (401) 737-1238.

# AMMACO Designs

## Handcrafted Wearable Art Jewelry and Knitted Accessories

AMMACO DESIGNS offers unique pieces of wearable art - handcrafted by Amy Marchand Collins. Every pair of earrings, shawl, or pendant sold helps her to be there for the people depending on her.

AMMACO Designs is a family venture. This business lists hand made items designed and made by Amy as well as her two children, both of whom have disabilities.

“I got SO much out of the business classes of the RIDDC. The practical advice and encouragement from people who are already running their own business helped me make the leap from *“thinking about starting a business”* to actually doing it. Best of all is having a community to bounce ideas off of who encourages one another through the weekly Entrepreneur’s Classes. I am also trying to help my children to participate in the workforce and to learn skills that will help their economic futures.”



Website: [https://www.etsy.com/shop/AMMACODESIGNS?ref=shop\\_sugg](https://www.etsy.com/shop/AMMACODESIGNS?ref=shop_sugg)

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/AmmacoDesigns/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/AmmacoDesigns/?ref=page_internal)

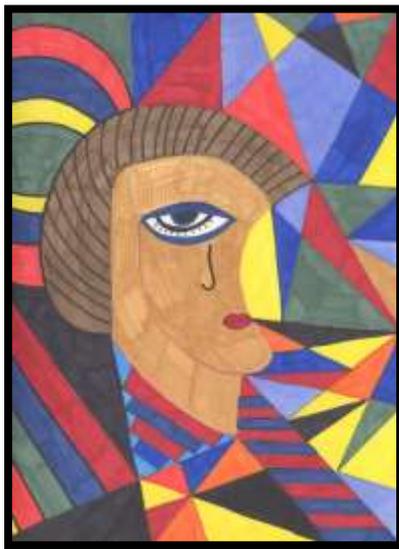
# Creations From The Heart

A Jamestown resident, Ali is known for her diligent work ethic and neat geometric style. She works in a predominantly primary color palette. Her small business of hand drawn greeting cards has been an ongoing venture since July, 2006 and she has sold thousands of cards in RI and other states since the business inception.



I really LOVE making my own art. All my work comes from the heart. It's very therapeutic for me. I get inspired for my work by looking around me and by nature. My cards are unique, beautiful, colorful, and less expensive in other places in stores!

The Business Classes of the Council on self-employment helped me to realize what important steps need to be done on how to run a business. I got a grant to purchase a new computer and it helps me do my accounting and other work for my business.



I love being a boss and having my own business! It has helped my self esteem to be really high! I sell my work at Downtown Designs and online.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CreationsfromtheHeartbyAli>

Downtown Designs: <https://www.downtowndesignsnewport.com>

“Downtown Designs” is an eclectic visual arts gallery and studio located in downtown Newport, RI. It's one of many artistic and inclusive arts community engagement initiatives of Looking Upwards.

# Jason's Creations

Hi my name is Jason and the name of my business is "Jason's Creations".

I custom make jewelry including necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and more! I really love making jewelry! I can custom make an item for you at a very reasonable cost!



I really liked taking some business classes to help me to learn about how to really make my business grow so more people know about my business. You can find my creations for sale at The Budding Violet, online, or you can email me too!



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jason.creationtrott.9>

Email: [JaysCreations83@gmail.com](mailto:JaysCreations83@gmail.com)

# Kaitlyn Bric Kreations

Kaitlyn runs her own small business, “**Kaitlyn Bric Kreations,**” where she converts her beautiful and inspiring paintings into colorful products like mousepads, mugs, magnets and t-shirts. Known primarily for her ornate hearts and trees, she has recently completed an animal series and is currently working on a nautical themed collection. My passion is painting!



Kaitlyn has shown widely in Rhode Island, including at the DeBlois Gallery and Downtown Designs Gallery in Newport and the Atrium Gallery in Providence.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KaitlynBricKreations/>

Downtown Designs: <https://www.downtowndesignsnewport.com>

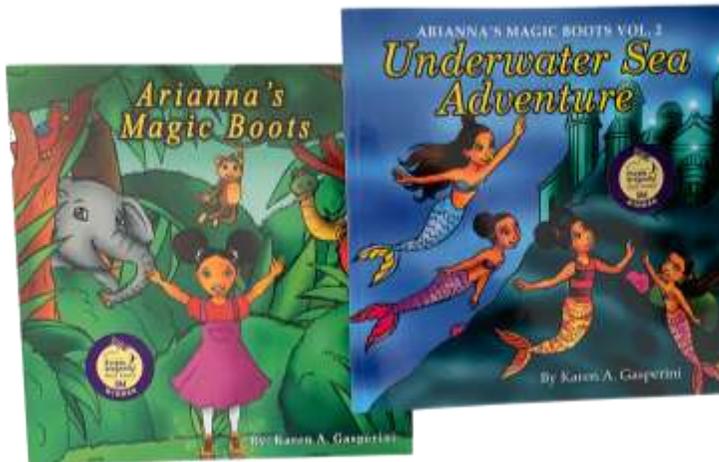
“Downtown Designs” is an eclectic visual arts gallery and studio located in downtown Newport, RI. Sharing Art, Sharing Space, Sharing Community is our passion! At our gallery, you will find artisans creating and showcasing one of a kind, handcrafted jewelry designs alongside a rotating collection of varied art mediums, all created by artisans with disabilities. You will also find unique handcrafted works created by various community artists who share space in our gallery. It's one of many artistic outlets and inclusive arts community engagement initiatives initiated by Looking Upwards.

# Karen Gaspirini, Children's Author

Hello, my name is Karen A. Gasperini (@karengasperini), I'm a disabled model and children's book author. I suffer from a rare genetic disorder called Beals syndrome, which causes clubfoot and curvature of the spine. I have worn AFOs (leg braces) since I was little and had a hard time understanding why I needed to wear them.



When my daughter was born with the same syndrome, it felt like a sense of déjà vu. To help my daughter get through her physical therapy and daily life, I made up stories that turned her leg braces into magical boots. My daughter, Arianna, inspired me to write a children's book series, called *Arianna's Magic Boots* (@ariannasmagicboots) to show other children they can be happy with who they are and can do anything they put your mind to.



I participated in the RIDDC's business development series and received so much support to help me to market my books and improve upon my website. I also received technical assistance from a Business Specialist. I would recommend these classes to anyone starting a business!

Website: <http://karengasperini.com>

Channel 12 "Street Stories" and The Rhode Show Interview:  
<http://karengasperini.com/interview-on-rhode-island-channel-12-street-stories-and-the-rhode-show/>

# Mackey's Lawn Care and More

Hi I'm Dylan and I'm 18 years old and I'm very proud of my business, "**Mackey's Lawn Care and More**". I've been involved with landscaping for over 4 years now and I have built up a customer base of close to 90 customers!

I specialize in landscaping and lawn care as well as mulching, fertilizing, fall/spring clean-ups, snow removal, and more. I will make your yard and landscaping beautiful and stand out in your neighborhood. I also can do snow plowing and with winter and snow coming soon I can offer efficeint and reasonable prices.



I am very ambitious and have invested back into my company the money I have made to purchase bigger and better equipment. I took the RIDDC's Business Development Classes and then I was lucky to receive a Mini-Grant to buy a new more efficient lawn mower. I hope to double my customer base in the next year from 90 customers in 2020 to close to 180 customers in 2021!

Check out my Facebook Page or give me a call at 401-999-2311.

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Mackeys-Lawn-Care-107251207347711/>

# Nathan Markley Photography

Nathan Markley is a photographer and Vlogger. Nathan has Autism and states his photographs are creative and unique because he “*sees the world differently and I use the camera to show the world how I see it.*” He has been taking photos since 2006, when he joined a photography club in high school.

“I really enjoy taking the different Business Classes and I especially appreciated getting help with my Elevator Pitch, because it will help grow my business!”



You can find Nathan on Instagram @nathanmarkleyphotography, and on his website at: <http://www.nathanmarkley.net/>

# Red, White and Brew Café and The Budding Violet

Hi, I'm Michael and I am the owner, along with my Mom, Sheila, of two businesses; "Red, White & Brew Café" and "The Budding Violet".



I wanted a job and a paycheck. I went on many interviews but did not get a call back. I was discouraged. I did not want to just keep volunteering my time and not getting paid. So I decided to start my own café business with my Mom. I love coffee and I love people.

I took some business classes, got business help, received a Mini-Grant and ongoing support through the Developmental Disabilities Council and Department of Labor and Training. It is hard work being a business owner. But I know I can do it!



I like meeting customers and seeing them enjoy our different products. We are a family owned coffee shop serving up more than a cup of coffee. We employ people with developmental disabilities, encourage community engagement, and change the way the world sees those with disabilities. We sell coffee roasted in nearby NH and sell muffins, pastries, and calzones.

The Budding Violet, is a gift shop filled with items from over 40 local artists, including people with disabilities! We have some really unique, handmade items!

Check out our Website and Facebook pages or stop in for our Latte of the Month or a great product in our gift shop! Gift Cards are also available.

Website: <https://www.redwhitebrewri.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/redwhitebrewri/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BuddingViolet/>

# Rock Solid Creations

Nicholas Votolato, business owner of “**Rock Solid Creations**”, loves dogs, spending time with people, and having fun running his business. Nic couldn’t find a long-term, reliable place to work that satisfied his passion to contribute and socialize with others, said Nic’s mom, Gail McCusker.



In spring of 2019, Nic and Gail enrolled in the RIDDC’s Self-Employment Business Incubator project, which offers people with developmental disabilities classes to learn how to run their own businesses. Nic’s love for dogs inspired his first product, a concrete dog bowl that dogs can’t budge without significant effort. Soon Nic developed a newly expanded inventory of stone dog bowls and decorative garden stones, sundials, candleholders, and other unique concrete items, all of which are very popular.



Check out Nic’s products online at his Facebook page or for sale at The Budding Violet in North Smithfield, RI.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rocksolidri/>

# Special Country Store

Devon loves making various craft items and decided to turn her hobby into a business. With support from staff at the Maher Center Devon participated in the RI Developmental Disabilities Council's Business Classes and learned various business skills to help her launch her business.

The Special Country Store is now selling various arts and crafts, Holiday decorations, standing Snowmen, Sleds, Santa's, and other decorations as well.



The Special Country Store was originally an off-shoot of the James L. Maher Center for people of all abilities. It now acts as independent business where they make and sell arts and crafts that different artisans who are very happy to be on their own have created!

Website: <https://specialcountrystore.netlify.app>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/specialcountrystore>

Email: [sbrousseau@mahercenter.org](mailto:sbrousseau@mahercenter.org)

# Ted Hinman's Studio of Metal Smithing and Fine Arts

Ted Hinman is an artist, blacksmith, toolmaker, and blade-smith. The range of his work includes: historical interpreting while demonstrating, outdoor garden sculptures, functional hardware, swords, authentic colonial reproductions for homes, such as door hinges and door handles and architectural iron work including hand made benches and railings. Ted works in other metals, such as aluminum, copper, brass, bronze, titanium and meteorite. He has worked on projects that incorporate ironwork with timber framing and ironwork for reproduction of a colonial merchant ship.



Presently, Ted is teaching metal-smithing through Amherst Leisure Services and private lessons for adults and teens. If you would like to learn to forge iron his blacksmithing classes are a safe and fun way for a novice! “An artist tends to mimic creation of things in the universe and nature by recreating it in his or her own way either by representational or by abstract means.”

“The business classes offered by the RI Developmental Disabilities Council have been extremely helpful. I have learned where to focus my energy.... Identifying my target market and using creative marketing strategies to attract new customers!”

Website: [www.tedhinman.com](http://www.tedhinman.com)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ted.hinman>

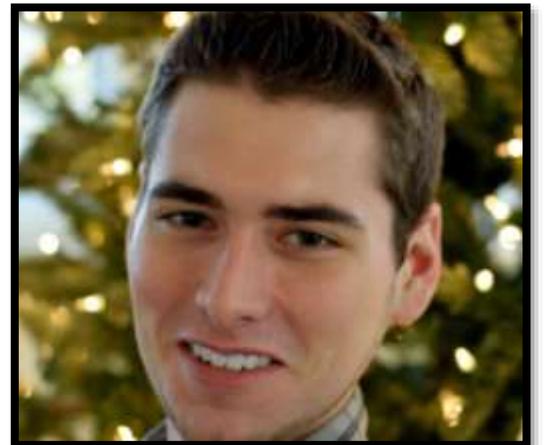
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/tedhinman/>

# Top Shot Photography & Graphic Design

Hi, my name is James and I'm 24 years old. The name of my business is "Top Shot Photography & Graphic Design". I offer photography services for portraits, pets, glamour, fitness and photo retouching. My customized graphic work includes design of logos, brochures, stationary, e-books, menus and signage. I can create custom work at a reasonable cost and help customers with business branding and making memories through photography.

The online Business Class Series organized by the Developmental Disabilities Council was a phenomenal learning experience for me. I learned an abundance of new information that will widely be used to strategically run my business in a sufficient manner. The people that you get connected with through taking the classes are also a great resource. I highly recommend taking the classes!

I'll be graduating in June 2021 with a Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Arts from SNHU! I'd like to show you some of my work and have you talk with some of my satisfied customers! Give me a call so we can talk!



Email: [TopShotDesigns1@gmail.com](mailto:TopShotDesigns1@gmail.com)

Phone: 401-644-4369

# We Be Jammin’

Jason Wood, with the help of his mother, Debbie Wood, started his revolutionary jam business, **We Be Jammin’**, which has grown in leaps and bounds making its way to its first official “*brick and mortar*” location, opening its doors to the public for its premier season last summer.

Based on his favorite snack, toast and jam, 31-year-old Jason, who is severely autistic and predominately non-verbal, was introduced to an opportunity to spread his entrepreneurial wings and participate in small business classes through the Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDCC) via a Real Pathways grant provided by the Department of Labor and Training (DLT).



Debbie, who is steadfast about focusing on what her son Jason CAN do, instead of what he cannot do, thought this business program and these classes were a great idea and jumped on board immediately. Starting with just a couple of traditionally flavored jams and a few farmer’s markets, the duo set out over the last few years on a journey of entrepreneurism that has proved to be successful, useful and fulfilling!

They now have 75 different products including jams, BBQ sauces, marinades, all natural peanut butter and all natural almond butter, salsas, salad dressings, ketchups, and more. They can make a custom gift basket for you or offer Gift Certificates!

Website: <https://webejammin.net>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/We-Be-Jammin-376166962930662>