

Programs

October 6, 2025 How Democracy Is Challenged Today and What We Can Do to Defend It

Speaker: Secretary of State Gregg Amore

Secretary Amore will address the state of democracy in the U.S., including protection of voting rights, and he will discuss how his office supports civics education in Rhode Island.

Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore is a lifelong resident of East Providence, where he has been a teacher, coach, and community volunteer for more than 30 years. Amore was elected in November of 2022 and sworn into office on January 3, 2023, as the thirtieth Rhode Island Secretary of State.

November 3, 2025 Maternova: A Social Enterprise for Global Maternal and Newborn Health Solutions

Speaker: Meg Wirth

Maternova is a woman-owned social enterprise focusing on women's health solutions through research, review, and sale of innovative, proven obstetric and newborn technologies to private hospitals, governments, ministries of health, NGOs, and health-care professionals around the world. Meg will discuss Maternova's mission and the very real implications of the current administration's massive cuts to U.S. foreign aid.

Meg Wirth, co-founder and president of Maternova, is an expert in maternal and neonatal health innovation. She has advised dozens of entrepreneurs and startups in women's health and global health during her work at Social Enterprise Greenhouse, an impact accelerator in Providence. Meg has also worked as a member of the Rockefeller Foundation's Health Equity team and co-edited a major volume called Challenging Inequities in Health: From Ethics to Action. She was a co-author of the UN Millennium Project's final report on child and maternal health. She has a BA from Harvard University and an MPA in international development from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School.

December 1, 2025 Youth Incarceration: What Are Its Effects Later in Life?

Speaker: Anna Aizer

Anna will discuss the impact of youth incarceration on adult outcomes, a subject that has interested her ever since her first job after college, at a program in which she observed that youth who had been locked up even briefly were less likely to succeed than those who had no prison exposure. Later she had an opportunity, using data from the Chicago court system, to test that hypothesis.

Anna Aizer is the Maurice R. Greenberg Professor of Economics at Brown University. She is a labor and health economist whose work considers the mechanisms behind the intergenerational transmission of income in the U.S.

January 5, 2026 ECHO Village: The First Year

Speaker: Michelle Masse

Michelle will discuss how House of Hope changes lives for Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents, the homeless. She will report on the outcomes of the ECHO Village project after its first year.

Michelle Masse, a lifelong Warwick resident and CCRI graduate, serves as Office Manager at House of Hope CDC. With over 40 years in the community, she plays a key role in the nonprofit's operations, supporting staff and leadership across all departments. Michelle is passionate about the House of Hope mission to make safe, stable housing a human right.

February 3, 2026 Helping Rhode Island's Latino and Immigrant Communities in a Political Climate Hostile Towards Immigration

Speaker: Mario Bueno

Founded in 1977 and located in Central Falls, Progreso Latino has grown into RI's Latino community organization, serving thousands of people each year through more than a dozen core programs and services. These programs include adult education, early childhood education, senior services, health and wellness, workforce development, domestic violence intervention and prevention, immigration, and food assistance. Mario will discuss how the current climate regarding immigrants has impacted the ability of Progreso Latino to deliver services to this community.

Mario Bueno has been the Executive Director of Progreso Latino since 2010. A fluent bilingual leader, Mario has over 30 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Under his leadership, Progreso Latino has expanded its reach, deepened its impact, and strengthened its role as a vital force for racial, educational, and economic justice in the state.

March 2, 2026 Owning the Meeting House: Women at First Unitarian Church

Speaker: Phyllis Cole

In our church's early years, many more women than men signed the covenant as members, but they sat in pews that only their husbands could own. Still, they rose as activists for charity in Providence, and they founded their own Women's Alliance, which we inherit from them. Phyllis will combine a rapid overview with some interesting characters.

As a professor of American literature at Penn State Brandywine, Phyllis Cole was long immersed in recovering women's stories from the archives. When she retired to Rhode Island and joined First U, she discovered the History Committee and a new field for that work.

April 6, 2026 Therapeutic Music at Hasbro Children's Hospital

Speaker: Aubrey Atwater

Join Aubrey for a fascinating examination of her long-time work at Hasbro Children's Hospital as a Therapeutic Musician and marvel at the healing, transcendent role of music.

A member of Brown Health's Healing Arts team, Aubrey Atwater brings programs of comfort, humor, joy, beauty, and play for children, adolescents, family members, and workers in a wide variety of settings. With a psychology degree from Brown and decades of experience as a multi-instrumentalist and singer, Aubrey adeptly adjusts programs and repertoire for all ages, often in remarkably poignant circumstances. Part of the folk duo Atwater-Donnelly, Aubrey performs widely with her husband, Elwood Donnelly, and has produced numerous albums and books.

May 4, 2026 Not Your Mother's Girl Scouts

Speaker: Dana Borelli-Murray

Girl Scouting is more than 100 years old, and many of us have memories from our youth of friends, camping, and badges. Today's world, however, is much more diverse and fast-paced, as young women worry about climate change, mental health, inclusion, war, and guns. How does today's Girl Scouting help prepare today's girls for a changing world?

Dana Borelli-Murray is the CEO of Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England, where she is laser-focused on ensuring that Girl Scouts is the most relevant, engaging, youth-centered, and inclusive leadership development program available.