



February 2026

# SACRI NEWS



## The Beacon



**“In February, the seeds of perseverance grow beneath the frost.” - Unknown.  
SACRI sends wishes of hope, unity and love to all. May we begin to prepare for the promise of spring  
and a move to serve each other to make RI a better place for all.**

### A Message of Hope and Love from The Samaritans of Rhode Island By Denise Panichas

Hope and love comes to us in many ways. It can arrive quietly—a hug from a family member, a helping hand from a neighbor, or a simple “good morning” from someone passing by. These small gestures remind us that we are seen, that we matter, and that we share this world with people capable of kindness.

At the same time, every day, each of us can extend hope and love. We might offer a compliment on a job well done, surprise a stranger by paying for their coffee, or give up a good parking space so someone else’s day is a little easier. We notice their look of surprise. We notice their smile. And in that moment, we are reminded that kindness still matters—that it can brighten a day, soften a burden, or help someone feel less alone.

Love, too, is found in these everyday exchanges. It is not always grand or dramatic. More often, it is steady and quiet, woven into the choices we make to treat one another with patience, gentleness, and respect. Love shows up when we listen without judgment, when we offer understanding instead of assumptions, and when we choose compassion even in hurried or difficult moments.

As we move through February, a month often associated with love, may we remember that hope and love are not limited to holidays or special occasions. They live in the ordinary moments of our lives. They grow each time we choose to care, to notice, to reach out and or simply be present for someone by listening.

At The Samaritans of Rhode Island, we believe these small acts—given and received—are powerful. They remind us that connection is possible, that healing is possible, and that even in challenging times, hope can be renewed one person, one moment, one kindness at a time.

Since 1977, The Samaritans—Rhode Island’s most trusted listening line—has been here for anyone seeking someone to listen. Our volunteer-staffed service is anonymous, free, non-transactional, and offered with no expectations—just kindness, compassion, respect, and the gentle practice of befriending. Call once or call us as daily as long as we are needed. Maybe even for a lifetime. You are never burden to a Samaritan volunteer.

Learn more at [www.samaritansri.org](http://www.samaritansri.org). Give us a call at 401.272.4044 or 1.800.365.4044.

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## SACRI's Affordability Agenda

### Affordability has Entered the Chat

#### Maureen Maigret and Carol Anne Costa

George Burns once said, "I look to the future because it's where I'm going to spend the rest of my life." No truer words have been spoken, and they are as important today as they ever were. The price of the ticket to our collective future is getting pricier every single day. This begs the question; can we afford the price of admission to the show we are mandated to attend? For many older adults the answer is no. So, affordability has entered the chat and SACRI is a leader in that work.

We at SACRI are pleased the issue of AFFORDABILITY is front and center on the minds of some of our elected leaders and policy makers. As the cost of food, housing, utilities and healthcare has increased -- with no end in sight -- meeting basic needs is particularly difficult for lower-income older Rhode Islanders. The percentage of Rhode Island older adults living in poverty has increased. However, the poverty measure itself is not a true measure of poverty as it is based primarily on food costs and fails to reflect the realities of today's living expenses. The Elder Index (2024) found that a single older Rhode Island renter in good health needed \$31,272 to meet basic expenses (food, transportation, housing, healthcare, miscellaneous) an amount at least 200% of the federal poverty level with only 16% of that attributed to food cost.

US Census data shows 25 percent of Rhode Island older households have income less than \$25,000, far less than what is needed to pay for basic needs. Issues of affordability and the economic security of our older lower-income Rhode Island neighbors have been a significant concern for SACRI over the years. And we work consistently to promote policies and legislation to address them. Our concern is heightened as we consider that Social Security (mean RI retiree benefit of \$25,294) is increasing by just 2.8% while at the same time Medicare Part A deductibles and coinsurances are increasing, the Part B premiums is increasing to \$202.90 a month from \$185, and inflation is projected to continue. To strengthen the economic security of lower-income older Rhode Islanders we propose a robust Affordability Agenda for 2026.

Continued...



## SACRI's 2026 AFFORDABILITY AGENDA FOR OLDER ADULTS

- Address Inequities in Medicaid Eligibility for Older Adults – Persons age 65 and over and adults with disabilities are the only Medicaid recipients whose resources cannot exceed \$4,000 (single person) which is especially unfair to those receiving home care. These asset limits must be more reasonable.
- Update Property Tax Relief (Circuit Breaker) Program – Eligibility for the state property tax credit/refund program for older and disabled persons is currently \$39,275. Increasing the income to \$50,000 would help more persons offset rising property taxes and housing costs.
- Target Portion of Housing Bond Funds for Low-Income Units for Older Adults – Rent increases impact many older household budgets especially those on fixed incomes. SACRI research found wait lists as long as five years for some subsidized apartment developments for the elderly.
- Continue to Improve Access to Medicare Savings Program (MSP). MSP pays for Part B Medicare Premiums for low-income persons. However, persons cannot have more than \$9,950 (individual) in assets to be eligible. RI should join with 13 the states (including Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont) and DC who removed the asset limit.
- Expand Access to Homemaker services – The Office of Healthy Aging @Home Cost Share program pays a share of the cost for homecare/homemaker services for older adults with income below 250% of the federal poverty level who need help with personal care and household tasks. Let's allow those needing homemaker only services to participate as privately paid homemaker costs average \$34/hour.
- Allow the Elderly Transportation (ET) program to provide trips to Food Banks – Many older adults who cannot afford the foods they need to stay healthy also no longer drive. Allowing the ET program to provide rides to local food banks would help them better access nutritious food improving their food security and saving them money.
- Create a Caregiver Tax Credit – Rhode Island's over 100,000 caregivers provide the vast amount of long term supports and services and are estimated to spend \$7,200 out-of-pocket, an especial burden for our lower income older adults caring for loved ones.

Supporting SACRI's Older Adult Affordability agenda is a way to help ensure that the future George Burns spoke of is not reachable to only the few, but achievable for a wider swath of RI's older adults.



## Mayor Smiley Inducts Four Community Leaders into the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Hall of Fame



ADVOCATE

EDUCATE



CELEBRATE

HONOR

### Among them SACRI Board Member Linda A'Vant Deishinni

“Every year, this award is granted to a Providence leader who brings our community together with love and grace,” said Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris (Ward 11). “In honor of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I hope our city continues to recognize our great leaders and all that they do to make positive change.” Inductees were nominated by members of the public, with the PHRC sending recommendations to Mayor Smiley, who selected the honorees based on their contributions to social justice, civil rights and equity. Juan Carter, Linda A’Vant-Deishinni, Diana Garlington and Patricia Raub (posthumously) will be Inducted in the 23rd Annual Hall of Fame.

Mayor Brett P. Smiley will induct Juan Carter, Linda A’Vant-Deishinni, Diana Garlington and Patricia Raub (posthumously) into the 23rd Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Hall of Fame. The ceremony was held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 5:30 PM in the City Council Chambers.

“These four community leaders have dedicated their lives to serving Providence and uplifting our communities,” said Mayor Brett P. Smiley. “Through their leadership, advocacy and dedication to justice, they have made a meaningful difference in the lives of many neighbors. Their efforts reflect the values Dr. King championed and demonstrate how commitment and action can create lasting change. We are proud to honor their work and the positive impact they continue to have across our city.”

SACRI congratulates all the honorees, and we are so proud of our Board Member Linda A’Vant - Deishinni, who works each and every day to improve the lives of RI’s older adults. Linda has over 40 years of experience working with nonprofits and cultural institutions in Rhode Island. She is Executive Director of the St. Martin de Porres Senior Center and Coordinator for Black Catholic Ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Providence. Her experience includes Executive Director and co-founder of the International Gallery for Heritage and Culture, Education Specialist at Brown University’s Haffenreffer Museum, Coordinator for the Providence Children’s Museum AmeriCorps Program and roles with the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, Rhode Island Foundation and Rhode Island Black Heritage Society. She develops programs for aging communities and their families and has led research and curated exhibitions on Black communities in Rhode Island. She is a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and has received numerous fellowships, awards and citations for her work.

CONGRATULATIONS to ALL!

*Images & Copy from PVD Press Release*

**Click anywhere on this page to reserve your table space for the 3-13-2026 Legislative Forum ... and spread the word.**




*Our Affiliates are so Sweet*



**Meals on Wheels**  
OF RHODE ISLAND

**Valentine's Day Heart Healthy Sweet Potatoes**  
Cooking Time: 25 Minutes

**Ingredients:**

- 
- 1 Medium Sweet Potato, diced into little love bites
  - ½ Cup Red Onion, Diced
  - 1 Tablespoon of Cilantro, Minced
  - 1 ½ Tablespoon of Fat Free Canola Oil
  - Pinch of Salt - Dash of Pepper
  - **Optional Valentine's Day Twist: Sprinkle of paprika for warmth or drizzle of honey for sweetness.**

**Directions:**

- Preheat oven 350 degrees filling the kitchen with warmth and love
- Toss the sweet potato cubes with red onion, and canola oil until everything is cozy and covered.
- Spread on a nonstick baking sheet and bake for 15- 20 minutes, or until sweet potato cubes are fork tender and golden.
- Toss with herbs, and a dash of black pepper

Serve warm and share with someone you love!



**Senior Agenda Coalition**  
of Rhode Island

**SACRI is making improvements to the website,  
kindly check in often**



**Senior Agenda Coalition  
of Rhode Island**

A Beacon for RI's Older Adults & Adults with Disabilities

### **Navigant Credit Union Donates \$10,000 to SACRI Announce Financial Education and Safety Resource Collaboration**

SACRI (The Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island) is proud to announce a generous \$10,000 donation from Navigant Credit Union in support of ongoing efforts to protect older Rhode Islanders from scams and financial exploitation as well as promoting financial security outreach.

SACRI and Navigant Credit Union share a deep commitment to improving the wellbeing of older adults through community education, resources, and awareness initiatives. This partnership will strengthen outreach programs aimed at helping older adults recognize scams, avoid fraud, and gain access to trusted financial safety tools.

"We are deeply grateful to Navigant Credit Union for their incredible support," said Carol Anne Costa, SACRI Executive Director. "This gift allows us to expand our educational outreach and empower more older Rhode Islanders to stay safe and financially secure."

Navigant Credit Union has long prioritized community service and financial literacy. Through this collaboration, SACRI and Navigant will deliver workshops, informational materials, and online resources to older adults and their families & caregivers across the state.

"With this partnership, we're reinforcing our commitment to protecting the financial health of Rhode Islanders of all ages. Together, we can help our older adults, families and caregivers make informed decisions and avoid scams that threaten their security," said Amanda LaRose, Navigant AVP of Financial Education.

SACRI looks forward to launching new awareness programs this spring, made possible by the generous support of Navigant Credit Union.



## SACRI's Legislative Watch: Alerts to Empower Your Voice

Rhode Island's 2026 legislative session is here, and SACRI is ready to guide our community through the bills shaping aging policy. Expect our Advocacy Alerts straight to your inbox — quick, clear calls to action on priorities like:

- Rep. Lauren H. Carson's H7279 to continue the work of the Commission to study programs for RI's Older Adults.
- Sen. David Tikoian and Rep. Scott Slater's Resolutions for \$100,000 more in funding for long term care ombudsman program.
- Revenue measures including "Fair Share" wealth tax proposals to fund vital services.
- H7029 Home foot care access for home bound people.

**These alerts will equip you to contact legislators and protect programs for older adults.**

*Click to find public broadcasts on Capitol TV*



# What's Happening



Save the Date  
3-13-2026

Legislative Leaders Forum

Gaige Hall @ RI College

Parking lots H I J

**Registration Opens 2-2-2026**

**FREE FREE FREE**

**Bring your voice**

**Affiliate Member Benefits:** As a valued affiliate, we are offering you priority access to our limited table spaces at a significantly reduced rate:

- Exclusive Rate: Only \$25.00 per table.
- Early Access: Priority entry for set-up to ensure your display is ready before the doors open.
- Ample Exposure: Dedicated "browsing time" is built into the schedule to ensure attendees can interact with your team.
- Full Participation: Your registration includes a seat at the forum and a provided breakfast.

**Event Details:** *We expect a full house*

- Date: Friday, March 13, 2026 - Free admission for attendees with a reservation.
- Location: Rhode Island College (RIC)
- Purpose: Bringing together elected legislators to discuss and champion the 2026 Aging and Disability Agenda.

Space is limited and reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Because this forum is a highlight of the legislative season, we encourage you to reserve your spot early to take advantage of this exclusive affiliate access.

Keep in touch - Forward this email - Sign up for news - Contact us  
We would love to come to your place to present our goals & initiatives.



We want to hear your stories!

401-451-8158 [sacri.org](http://sacri.org)



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