New Director of LGBTQ Center named

Brianna Resto

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University police officer protects, connects with campus community

HENSLEY CARRASCO
Managing Editor

Since 1997, University of Rhode Island patrolman Mark Chearino has created another role in his job by doing more than protecting and serving the URI community.

After working in airfield operations from 1986 to 1994, Chearino took up a job in security until around 1996. That year there was a job opening on campus at the police department and he decided to apply. Chearino got the job, went to the police academy, graduated and became a police officer in 1997.

He said he knew he wanted to do something geared toward a police or a firefighting profession and when the opportunity opened up he knew he had to take it.

Chearino said he does everything a police officer is required to do. In addition to that, Chearino said he “butts heads” with the students because people are moving around non-stop and running to class. Chearino takes the afternoon-to-early-morning shift, which he said was the “downtime” shift. This time allows Chearino to socialize with students. He said he doesn’t let the fact that he socializes with students get in the way of him doing his job. He said if there is a good cop

URI student a rapper on his way to making it big

BY SARAH CALLAHAN
Contributing News Reporter

Have you ever wondered how music artists get famous? How your favorite rap star was discovered in some small city? It has to start somewhere and for one University of Rhode Island student “Think Big” is definitely a motto he lives by.

Junior Bobby Colombi, who is majoring in communications studies, was born and raised in Warwick, R.I. Colombi began listening to rap music in seventh grade.

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Many know him as “BoCo” and for those who don’t, it won’t be long until you do. The three songs with include, “Inaugural Address” and “Swagger Jagger,” which have reached thousands of views on YouTube from people all over the world.

High school was when Colombi began rapping for an audience. As a freshman and sophomore, he would attend parties where people would ask him to freestyle, which commonly refers to rap lyrics which are improvised through a capella or with instrumental beats.

By his senior year of high school, Colombi began to post recorded versions of his freestyles onto Facebook. At this time Mark Rossi, also from Warwick, began making instrumental beats for Colombi to rap to.

Rossi and Colombi made a good pair when it came to making new music.

After graduating from Warwick Veterans High School, Colombi and Rossi entered URI in the fall of 2009. Colombi continued to rap and Rossi began making new music.
New director of LGBTQ Center named

Elizabeth "Annie" Russell has been named the new director of the LGBTQ Center at the University of Rhode Island last month.

Russell came to URI from Bowling Green State University in Ohio where she earned a doctorate and also taught. At URI, she has taken a teaching job within the Women's Studies department.

Russell, originally from Indiana, felt it was time for her to pursue further education, so she moved to Michigan where she attended Adrian College as an undergraduate student. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in communication, she decided to attend Ohio University to obtain her Master's degree in Education. From there, she went on to obtain her Ph.D. in higher education administration.

While qualified educationally, Russell also has the life experience needed to make a difference at URI.

"When I was going through my own 'outing' process, the administration at Adrian was so supportive," she said.

Russell said she wants to be there for students in the same way the administration at Adrian College was for her. "We can make this a better place," she added.

Russell said that she is adjusting well to Rhode Island living.

"I'm loving the weather," she said.

Currently residing in Cranston with Mabel, her beagle-Dotson mix, Russell said that she intends to stay at URI for a long while, with the hopes that she can turn URI into a "premier institution" on LGBTQ issues in just five years.

Russell has been working on a strategic planning process in which she maps out everything she hopes to accomplish at URI. This planning will finally come to fruition on Feb. 16 when the first "Queer Town Hall Meeting" will take place at 7 p.m. in the Multicultural Center, Room 005. Her plans for the meeting is to have students be able to talk freely about "queer issues" that are present on and around campus, she said. Russell encourages all students to attend.

"You don't have to identify with any of the LGBTQ labels to attend and be supportive," she said.

Russell is adamant on reaching out to students and has two core messages to deliver to the student body as a whole.

"People care about you and they love you," she said. "My door is always open."

Russell's office is located in Adams Hall on the first floor and she urges students to drop in, say hello, and introduce themselves.

"Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see a shadow."

Check out some of the best albums of 2011.
193 Coffeehouse offers cozy atmosphere, cheap drinks, live musical entertainment

BY NANCY LAVIN

Where can you find $1 coffee at the University of Rhode Island? Nowhere, right? Think again. Though its chain, for-profit counterparts like Dunkin' Donuts and Bagels may be more well known to URI students, the 193 Coffeehouse does in fact offer $1 coffee, and a lot more too.

The student-run, not-for-profit coffee lounge has been a student hangout spot since it began in 1994. Originally located on the ground floor of the Memorial Union, where RAM Computers is currently, the coffee shop has since moved to the end of the first floor of the union, tucked away in a corner complete with couches, board game, and a wide variety of beverages.

"It's not really work, because it's not anything extremely difficult, but it's really a lot of fun," said sophomore employee Kyle DeMartino, who started working there this past September. "It's really the people who make it a good place to work."

The staff consists of 16 volunteers who work for a small stipend, about $20 per semester, for three hours per week, according to co-coordinator Elena Krajeski. Krajeski added that despite the lack of monetary incentive, the staff is at full capacity, and always recruiting more applications.

"I wish this could be a full-time job, that would be great," DeMartino said. He added that even without pay, he would love to work more at 193 because of the "funky atmosphere and friendly staff."

"It's a real community feel, a hangout place," Krajeski explained. "I don't have a living room, so this essentially acts as my living room when I'm at URI."

Plenty of students seem to find the atmosphere welcoming as well, since various student groups elect to hold meetings and events at the shop. The 193 Coffeehouse also has its own events coordinator who organizes bimonthly open mike nights and concerts on weekends.

"When we have a concert going on or an open mike night, this place is pretty much packed," DeMartino said. Between the morning rush for coffee before class and these big events, the shop usually makes about $300 per week, which is funnelled back into the coffee shop for buying supplies and coffee, according to Krajeski.

Schoellkopf is advocating for gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, and why the University of Rhode Island should seek to have more of them in its buildings. In order to raise awareness about this issue, Schoellkopf is planning to host a protest and collect signatures on a petition in the 24-hour room in the library on Wednesday, April 18.

Gender-neutral bathrooms, according to Schoellkopf, are ideally, single stall restrooms a person of any gender can use. People who would benefit from these restrooms, Schoellkopf said, are disabled people who may have a caregiver of a different gender. For the same reasons, single parents who have a child who is a different gender than them would also benefit from the addition of gender-neutral bathrooms. According to Schoellkopf, taking your child to the bathroom when you are a mother with a son, or a father with a daughter, can be an "uncomfortable experience" for the child, parent, and the people in the restroom.

One of the biggest reasons Schoellkopf is advocating for gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, however, is to be more inclusive toward transgender people. For transgender people, using public restrooms can lead to them being harassed, either through "crude comments or with violence."

"While I've been bringing this issue to light, I've talked to a few students on campus who thought this issue wasn't a big deal," Schoellkopf said. "I've had some people tell me that transgender people could just use a bathroom that matches their gender. Even if they were to do that, they'd still face the threat of harassment and violence. No one should feel uncomfortable when using the bathroom."

Schoellkopf also noted that there are students who may not identify as either male or female, who would be uncomfortable with using gendered bathrooms. There are also stu...
The LGBTQ Center’s goal is to be more safe spaces on campus, in the form of gender-neutral bathrooms, where everyone can feel included. According to Schoellkopf, a committee from the LGBTQ Center met with administration to propose that more gender-neutral bathrooms be created on campus. They cited that 37 buildings have a gender-neutral bathroom out of the 130 buildings in the University of Rhode Island. Those numbers, according to Schoellkopf, are “inexcusable.”

“There are over 100 buildings on campus that don’t have a gender-neutral bathroom,” Schoellkopf said. “Having only 37 isn’t enough. According to the Transgender Law and Policy Institute, the best practice for a university is to have at least one in each building. That’s my goal and that’s the LGBTQ Center’s goal, but we’re still struggling with administration.”

Senator Brian Sit also highlighted the fact that the LGBTQ Center last year held a committee that attempted to map out all of the locations of gender-neutral bathrooms on campus. The biggest example of how easily more gender-neutral bathrooms could be created, according to Sit, is in the library’s 24-hour room, where gendered bathrooms have just a toilet and a sink, and there is “no reason why it couldn’t be changed to gender-neutral.”

“The situation has improved over the years,” Sit said. “Adams Hall has a gender-neutral bathroom, and we’re lucky for that, since the LGBTQ Center is there. But not every building or dorm can advocate so strongly.”

Bruce Hamilton, director of the Student Involvement and the Center for Student Leadership, said that while there are some difficulties with installing gender-neutral bathrooms in certain buildings, it is “not something that is hard to do.”

“It’s ridiculous to hear people tell you it can’t be done,” Hamilton said. “There’s a gender-neutral bathroom in (Memorial Union), for one. It was not a huge cost for us [to install], and we felt it was a very important thing for us to do.”

For Schoellkopf, being able to advocate for more gender-neutral bathrooms on campus holds personal significance to her. Schoellkopf, who has worked with special needs children in the past, has seen how people with disabilities cannot always access public places. To bring this issue to light is a great way to help “bring about change in [their] campus community.”

“During my time at URI, I’ve noticed that LGBTQ issues and problems that people with disabilities face are often overlooked,” Schoellkopf said. “Everyone deserves the right to be included in public places.”

In other news:

Tonight, members of the Student Senate will go to President Dooley’s house to discuss various issues on campus.