

# EVERYDAY HEROES

An inside look at the people who make dreams come true at Meeting Street

## THE BRIDGE BUILDER

Meet Aura Orellana

*Family Resource Specialist, RI*



Aura Orellana knows what it's like to be a child in a new country.

"That feeling of being trapped in a house, not speaking the language and not knowing where to go for resources, it makes me sad," recalls Aura, who emigrated from Guatemala at the age of 13 and now serves as a lifeline to families through Meeting Street's Family Resource Center. The program, announced last spring as part of a congressional appropriation made possible by Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed, provides concierge-style assistance to families with children under the age of six who need support to meet their child's developmental needs.

With a degree in social work, Aura has spent her career empowering parents, first as a resource coordinator for court-involved families and later as a case manager for mothers receiving intensive treatment for their substance-use disorder. "My passion is working with families and connecting them to the resources they need."

The goal of the Family Resource Center is to ensure children do not "fall through the cracks" developmentally due to a lack of access to – or parental awareness of – available programs. Using her skills as a grassroots organizer, and in partnership with community-based organizations, Aura meets with families – by phone and in-person – to assess both the family's and child's needs. [\(Story continues on page 2.\)](#)



## EXPANDING HORIZONS IN MASSACHUSETTS

### Inclusive Classroom Days:

The Schwartz School and our Massachusetts Early Intervention (EI) program teamed up to create inclusive learning days for our youngest students. Each week, children ages 2 to 4 at The Schwartz School hosted the EI toddler group while parents had open conversations about inclusion and diversity, and how to talk to their young children about these topics.

## The Bridge Builder *(continued)*

"At first I felt like Google," says Aura with a laugh, "because people would call me wanting an answer to one question. Now, I do a full intake where I'm able to get the whole picture and see what the family needs, what the child needs, and I connect them to existing programs."

After her initial assessment and referrals and recommendations, Aura follows-up with families to check in, see if connections were made and if additional support is needed. "It's not just about giving answers, we're building a small family," says Aura of the program, "I want people to know we are here. Regardless of their background or the language they speak, Meeting Street is here."

If you or someone you know is in need of support but unsure where to start, please have them contact Aura at 401.714.7642 or at [aorellana@meetingstreet.org](mailto:aorellana@meetingstreet.org).

## Massachusetts Horizons *(continued)*

### Financial Literacy

Bristol County Savings Bank (BCSB) recently offered Financial Literacy training to families enrolled in our Early Childhood Programs. Over the four-workshop series, families learned how to create saving and spending plans, build a healthy credit history, budget for housing and home ownership, and borrowing basics. BCSB branch managers volunteered their time to facilitate these sessions and Meeting Street Massachusetts' staff provided Spanish translation and childcare at each session.



### Family Story Time

In partnership with the New Bedford Public Library, Meeting Street hosted a weekly story time, helping to provide literacy activities for families while also demystifying the library experience. The group was held in English and Spanish and included bilingual materials. Participating parents received tours of the library and its offerings and left with their very own library card to encourage more parent-child reading at home.

*Endless Summer*

Presented by **CLARKE**  
WOLF SUB-ZERO COVID

**Saturday, June 8**  
Kilburn Mill, New Bedford

The party of the summer returns to the deck at Kilburn Mill for a night on the boardwalk! This year we honor

**Patrick Murray Jr. & Michele L. Roberts**

of Bristol County Savings Bank with our inaugural

**Founders' Award**

**SEATING IS LIMITED!**



## COMMUNITY DAYS

To celebrate the opening of our Early Childhood Building in Providence, Meeting Street is hosting these free, family-friendly events on our Eddy Street campus. All are welcome to attend! Scan the QR code to register.



### Story Time\* and Open Playground

(English & Spanish)

Thursday, May 23

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

### Early Learners' Soccer Clinic (6 and under)

Sunday, July 21

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### Juneteenth Story Time\* and Open Playground

featuring RI Black Storytellers

(English & Spanish)

Saturday, June 15

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### Open House & Family Fun Day

Saturday, August 24

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

*\*First 100 families to register receive a free book!*



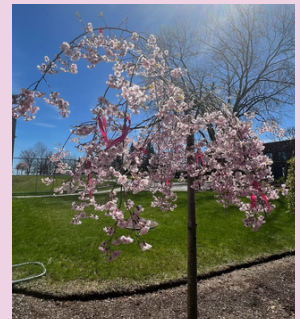
## THE SCHWARTZ SCHOOL SCIENCE FAIR

Students at The Schwartz School put their skills on display at their recent Science Fair. In preparation, each classroom selected a scientific question and developed a methodology to test their hypotheses. Classroom educators then summarized the students' work during a science fair for family and friends. As you might expect, the erupting volcano was the students' favorite project!

## Ribbons of Love

Each year Meeting Street hosts a memorial ceremony on our Dartmouth and Providence campuses to remember the students, family members and friends we have lost over the past year. During the event, memories are shared and ribbons are tied to a newly planted tree in remembrance of each individual.

If you would like to have a loved one remembered during one of our celebrations, please complete the enclosed form, or scan the QR code below, and you will be contacted with additional information.



*Thank you!*



## CONGRESSMAN AMO VISITS MEETING STREET

Rhode Island's Congressman Gabe Amo visited middle school students at The Grace School, Meeting Street's fully inclusive K-8 school in Providence, and The Hope Academy, a K-8 Mayoral Charter School housed on Meeting Street's Providence campus. The Congressman shared his journey from being raised by immigrant parents in Central Falls to serving in the administration of three United States Presidents. Our students asked about work-life balance, handling the stress of Washington and, most importantly, his favorite food (pizza!).



## WE WANT YOU! *(and your children, grandchildren & friends)*



Talented professionals and our community supporters are what make Meeting Street such a special place. Amid the ever-shifting hiring landscape, we continue to search for smart, compassionate and hard-working individuals to join our team in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. ***If you or a friend are looking to start a new chapter, please visit our career page at [MeetingStreet.org/Careers](https://MeetingStreet.org/Careers).***

If your working days are over and you're interested in occasional volunteer work for a great cause, please e-mail Melissa at [mcolton@meetingstreet.org](mailto:mcolton@meetingstreet.org).

## MEETING STREET PROFESSIONALS IN THE NEWS



You may recall being introduced to Al Hulley, or "Mr. Al" as he is lovingly referred to on campus, in an earlier edition of *Everyday Heroes*. Al works as a Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA) on our Providence campus and he was recently recognized by the Rhode Island chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) for his work as chapter Secretary, advocating for legislation to address the conflicts between students' Individual Education Plans and state regulations. In 2016 Al was recognized by APTA as an Emerging Leader and received the Zelia Celona PTA Award in 2019. Congratulations, Mr. Al!