

Never Stop Learning, Rhode Island!

Students of the world, unite! You don't need to matriculate to scoot up behind a desk and start learning or help those you love learn something new. Does someone you know want to master the art of belly dancing or become the head chef of your kitchen? Meet new people while honing burgeoning crafting skills? Here is a partial round-up of opportunities to learn a new skill in Rhode Island. Gift that hard to please person on your list a set of lessons or buy some lessons for both of you so you can join in the fun! Giving someone the chance to learn a new skill is a gift that will last long after the Christmas lights have been packed away, and trying to learn that new skill with them is a great way to bond over a newfound talent.

The following list has just a few ideas. Our state is filled to the brim with creative talents and many of them teach. Think about favorite destinations or hobbies for that certain gift recipient, and then ask about classes at those places. Musicians can point you toward musical training, bartenders can tell you where to study the art of the pour, and just about every sport has trainers somewhere. Here are some starting ideas.

Cluck: Everyone's favorite urban supply and farm store on Broadway in Providence wants to pack your supply kit with knowledge along with farm tools. There's a cold frame building class on February 6. A month after that, they teach lessons on how to hunt the mushrooms growing in the depths of the forest. Mushroom hunting is a growing trend and this class can give you the information to hunt mushrooms safely and with great skill. (cluckri.com)

If you're closer to Wakefield, you might also consider Southern New England Mushroom Hunting ([search Facebook](#)).

Rhody World Music: I challenge you to find a company that offers both belly dancing classes and ukulele jam sessions at the same time. Okay, I found one. Rhody World Music, founded in 2013, offers private and group classes that you aren't likely to find anywhere else. Rhody World Music prides itself on creating a multicultural space where community is built and new and exciting skills are obtained! therhodycenter.org

The gift of music has been known to lighten souls. Other places to check out include Wakefield Music (Ukelele classes and other instruments | wakefieldmusic.com) and Blackstone River Theater (everything from music appreciation with Duke Robillard, to step dancing, to dulcimer, to stone carving (?), to... more ukeleles | riverfolk.org/programs.html)

Cooking!: The holidays are famously stressful, especially if you have to endure your mother-in-law's traditionally terrible cooking at every family gathering. This year, send her into the kitchen with Easy Entertaining so she can learn from the best. Go with her and you can learn how to bake bread together! The best part of baking bread is that after you're done, you have fresh bread to eat. Literally every time you bake bread this happens ... you should try it. easyentertainingri.com

Look for other cooking classes regularly at the venerable Al Forno (alforno.com). Chef Walter's Cooking School, where classes are taught by the local TV Chef, has numerous options (although Knife Skills for Couples sounds a little frightening | chefwalterscookingschool.com), Professor Chef in North Providence (professorchef.com), David Dadekian's classes (eatdrinkri.com) and of course, at culinary behemoth Johnson & Wales (jwu.edu).

Four Corners Art Center: You know that really crafty friend who out-does everybody else during the holidays by piecing together a quilt using the material from your high school formals? Well, this year you could be that crafty friend! Take classes at Four Corners to learn how to do a bunch of crazy cool stuff. Let's be real, you're not going to teach yourself how to rug hook or make ornaments. The teachers in Newport's premier art center are there to give you the artistic nudge you need.

(fourcornersarts.org/index.php)

RISD: Does someone on your list want to hone their artistic abilities? Does taking classes at one of the country's best art schools sound good? Rhode Island School of Design offers classes for kids, teens and adults! You don't need to make a four-year commitment to get a world-renowned education. Sign yourself or your art-curious friend up for non-credit classes in fine arts, product development, design studies, digital design, the business of art and design or art history and appreciation. (ce.risd.edu)

More Art: From the obscure to the sublime, AS220 also offers a wide range of art classes. They're a bit harder to find out about, but they include one-time and short-run classes on old-fashioned dark room photography and new-fangled laser cutters, robotics and 3D printing. Or help them learn welding, metal sculpting or how to "Recycle a Bike" at the Steel Yard.(thesteelyard.com). Finally, don't forget arts like hairstyling or make-up taught at Flipp (flippsalon.com)

Martial Arts: A black belt would look good on anybody, right? Hone the skills you already have or learn a totally new form of physical expression! Karate can help you defend yourself and is great exercise. There are martial arts schools every few blocks, and location is often crucial for actually attending, so look around your home or where your giftee works. There's a range from gentle Tai Chi to ball-busting Krav Maga. And there's always fencing (rifac.com).

More Sports: Rock climbing - it's perfect for winter ... if you do it indoors. Check out Rock Spot Climbing (rockspotclimbing.com). Or if your climbing urge is directed towards silks or ropes, consider Arielle Entertainment (ariellearts.com). Gallup to the class gift certificates offered by C&L Stables (candlstables.info) or spring for a Boston Skydive adrenaline boost (in Smithfield, despite the name | bostonskydivecenter.com). Almost any other sport that lights up your giftee's eyes probably has classes somewhere - from pole fitness (jmkennedyentertainment.com) and burlesquercize (search Facebook) to racecar driving (not for winter | seekonkspeedway.com).

[Escape Your Weekend Rut with Escape Rhode Island](#)

You know that reoccurring nightmare everyone has where you can't escape your 10th grade math class? You know, the dream where you're stuck until you get at least a B on the mid-term, which is frankly impossible because geometry is really really hard, guys, and why couldn't this have happened to me in ENGLISH CLASS? SORRY I'M A CREATIVE THINKER.

Okay, maybe that dream is specific to me.

Well, try to imagine that dream anyway. Only this time you aren't stuck in a math class and you have between one and 11 friends with you, and, oh yeah, there is a way out. Wait, that sounds kind of ... fun. Escape Rhode Island, opening Thursday, October 15, is a real-life game where players placed in a dimly lit room have one hour to solve puzzles and figure out clues for them to escape.

Escape Room games started gaining popularity online, until 2007 when real-life iterations of the Internet game popped up in Asia. Six years later the US saw its first Escape Room game in New York City.

Ethan Carlson, founder of Escape Rhode Island, a graduate of Yale University and game-player himself, saw an untapped market after moving to Providence in January 2013. He partnered with college friends who co-founded Escape Industries in New Haven, helping him adapt the game for Providence. "It's a perfect place for it. We have that creative and quirky community in spades."

I all but told Mr. Carlson about my deep-seated high school math-related trauma and expressed concern that a game of this nature would trigger unwanted feelings. "It's not claustrophobic, the rooms are normal sized and nothing jumps out at you. It's more a game of chess style of thinking."

The games are hard, but don't be deterred — they're for everyone. Each room has surveillance equipment that gauges how close the players are to escaping so no team spends too much time on one problem. The monitors move the game along so players always experience a journey. "The type of person this is for is very broad," Mr. Carlson explained.

So, if your eyes feel sore from playing online video games or if you're tired of hitting up the same bar every weekend, get over to 385 S Main St, Floor 2 in PVD. For more information:

escaperhodeisland.com

[Enjoy the Long Weekend at The Scituate Art Festival](#)



OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

This Columbus Day weekend, on October 10 - 12, head on down (or up, I don't know where you live) to North Scituate for the Scituate Art Festival. The town throws its annual event on the Village Green, on both sides of Route 116, North Scituate, from 10am - 5pm on Saturday and Sunday and 10am - 4pm on Monday. So, for all the autumn lovers already tired of apple picking, throw on a jacket, instagram Scituate's beautiful foliage (no filter) and prepare yourself for some fall fun. Proceeds for the fall-fest go to the town of Scituate - so come on down for a burst of culture that supports locals!

For almost half a century the town of Scituate has thrown a party built to benefit their community. It all

started in 1830 (seriously) when some locals wanted to build a third place of worship in town. What is colloquially known as the Old Congregational Church, used to house both Baptists and Congregationalists who would alternate Sundays at the now-aging white building, now is solely Congregationalists. The festival was born more than a century later in 1967 with a one-day festival aimed at raising money to renovate the historic church. Today, the festival still funds the church's upkeep, but also uses its proceeds to help approximately 30 local non-profits.

The Scituate Arts Festival, now in its 49th year, hosts locals and travelers from around the country. Attendants of the festival can find a juried arts and crafts show with exhibits ranging from antiques to woodwork to pastels to vintage clothes. Though, festival-goers won't just swallow their cultural intake in booth-sized cups, no sir, live music will swell throughout Village Green. Every day of the festival features at least three musical acts, closing off the event with an open mic night. So, who knows, maybe you're the final act?

I know what you're thinking, "Yeah, yeah. Immersion into the local culture is great, but what if I get HUNGRY?" Well, not to worry. The dozen non-profits that make up the food court provide scrumptious treats throughout the day. Indulge in a doughboy with the Rotary Club or in fall classics like pulled pork and pumpkin pie served on a warm plate by the Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church.

Gosh, I'm excited.

For more information visit: scituateartfestival.org/

[Design Week: An Experiment in Packing Talent into One Week](#)

DESIGN



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The macaroni I glued alongside of the edges of my third-grade school picture (my major design accomplishment) is propped up by decades of dust on my parent's bedroom shelf. As I write about the steamroller of designers about to plow through the streets of Providence within the next week, the macaroni falls from its dusty pedestal.

Design Week RI is a force to be reckoned with – guard your childhood mementos and lock the memory of your parents’ false-praise deeply into your psyche. During the week we’ll see designers like Friedrich St. Florian who envisioned the streets of downtown Providence the way we see them today, Aidan Petrie who built a modest toy company that bloomed into the world’s largest medical device developer, and Hannah Chung who developed a product to help children suffering from type 1 diabetes. That’s just to name a few. Seriously, I could have gone on for hours but listing too many accomplishments just bruises my ego.

Design Week, starting on September 16 and running through the 27th, is not just an action-filled celebration of the exorbitant design talent packed into the Ocean State — it’s an expansive and inclusive meeting of the minds. After New York and California, Rhode Island holds third place for having the largest portion of jobs in the design industry. The week hopes to build on the already burgeoning scene by using the time to introduce designers to potential clients. Over the course of the 11 days, in locations scattered all over Providence, there will be 16 eat and speak luncheons, three design conferences, and countless opportunities to network, learn and gain inspiration. Last year’s event entertained more than 1,000 guests and this year aims to see more, with an added weekend of activity, including a maker space open house and a design-thinking movie at the Cable Car.

“Design is at the epicenter of our lives,” says Lisa Carnavale, co-founder and director of Design Week. “It’s in everything that we do, that we touch — from what we wear, the lights we turn on and the chairs we sit on to the way we navigate a city, the buildings and landscape, the thoughtful pedestrian and vehicle experience, to the websites we visit, the phone apps that keep life moving, the experiences we encounter and even the advances in healthcare, the education system, the civic environment. It’s all design.”

Design Week itself is the result of a network woven together by the common thread of wanting to foster the growth of Rhode Island’s design community. Design week partners up with different design groups around the state, such as AIA, AIGA, ASLA, Better World by Design and RISD, as well as 16 design firms and an assortment of non-profits. In other words, a showering of design talent will rain on Providence throughout the week, leaving the terrain more supple and fertile than it was before.

Pronk! Celebrating Community, Activism and Plain Ol’ Fun

Providence Honk Festival (Pronk!) celebrates music, but probably not the way you’re used to seeing it celebrated. On October 12, Wickenden Street in Providence will become unusually brassy. Local favorites, like The Extraordinary Rendition Band and What Cheer? Brigade, as well as guests flying in from other locales, will fill the autumn air with a mix of melody and cacophony. A truly grassroots effort brought to our city streets thanks to local benevolence, Pronk! aims to mix locals and artists into one sticky pile, blurring lines between audience members and performers. No ticket or place in line grants access to the festival; you have it. Providence Honk Festival knocks down the traditional walls of performance for a truly immersive cultural experience.

So ... horn bands? That's it? Pronk! conjured up images of a nebulous bundle of trombones and bass drums whirling together in a tornado of sweaty musicians. I didn't get. Well, here is some context: Pronk! is an iteration of Honk!, the inaugural horn festival that took place in Somerville, Massachusetts, in 2006. Two local bands felt compelled to match their music with the political issues of the time, and called out to brass and drum bands around the country to play with them. That year, musicians from San Francisco, Chicago, Brooklyn and Vancouver flew in to populate Somerville's Davis Square with their raucously joyful music. And so Honk! was born.

Sizable and loud brigades of musicians provide the noisy and joyful soundtrack to organizations standing up for local issues all over the country, and Australia, Brazil and Rio de Janeiro joined the club this past year. Providence's Horn Festival shines a light on organizations like New Urban Arts, which is working to build an empowering community for high-school aged artists.

Pronk! is a simple concept with a long and continuously evolving history. Committee members, all non-paid volunteers, carve time out of their busy lives to help bring musicians to streets and strategize new and innovative ways to evolve while staying true to their non-commercial core. The purity of Pronk! distinguishes it from every other festival in Providence that chooses, and reasonably so, to have sponsors help fund the many costs of putting up a festival. Here's what excited me about Pronk!: Not just the concept of marching bands and brass-instrument wielding musicians flooding the streets, but the pure and simple goal of using music as a tool for activism.

Pronk! performers congregate at India Point Park at 2pm on October 12 to take turns entertaining the crowd. Performances are followed by a parade with a route yet to be announced, though in previous years it headed straight down Wickenden Street to end at The Hot Club, where performances continued into the night.

The PAF Moves Pawtucket's Evolution Forward

The Pawtucket Arts Festival (PAF) is more than a pop-up event with fried dough and face paint. Through October 4, PAF will bring the community affordable and interactive events that span across time and disciplines. The annual Taste of the Valley and the Blackstone River Party kicked off the festival at the historic grounds of Slater Mill in late August and then, over the six-week period, 20 eclectic events will take place throughout the city. The festival benefits Pawtucket, but also helps artists gain wide exposure in their community, possibly reaching new audiences and fans.

The festival looks deceptively youthful and, no, I don't know what lotion it uses. Billboards and promotional materials boast that the festival is in its 17th year when, in reality, its history extends back to the 1970s. "I think it's important that we anchor ourselves in the reality that the city has been trying to support the arts, has had organizations supporting the arts, and has had art festivals for 40 years," says Rich Watrous, co-chair of the festival.

Forty years ago, the city of Pawtucket used grant money and the funds from selling an old steamboat to start an organization that served as the city's arts council, which is now defunct. This started

Pawtucket's support of the arts. The festival celebrates the city's current cultural climate, but also pays homage to its artistic lineage. Watrous even spoke of putting up an exhibit showing Pawtucket's evolution as an artistic city some time later this year. The arts scene in the city has slowly and continuously evolved since the 1970s, which would explain the city's latest slogan, "Join the Evolution."

When trying to explain how this festival works, the phrase, "festival inception" comes to mind. The mini-festivals that take place throughout the next month all live under the giant Pawtucket Festival umbrella. These smaller festivals, like the S.A.M festival and Slater Park Fall Festival that take place at Slater Mill and Slater Memorial Park (respectively), are just the newest incarnations of the festivals that existed before, but under a different name.

Pawtucket Arts Festival doesn't just spring up and fall back down. One can treat the festival like a day-trip or let it shape their cultural calendar for longer than a month. The events stretch out, planned so they start slow and then build in momentum as time progresses. Each event on the itinerary could stand on its own, but instead the festival pieces these events together to create a network for the artists.

This year the festival lasts six weeks, cramming in two more weeks of events than in years past. The festival bursts with so much life that even the brochure doesn't list the entirety of the events planned during the six-week extravaganza. "We have things like the 16th annual Pawtucket film festival, which has a particular bent toward the music industry. In between each film set, music is performed." In other words, there is a concert nuzzled inside of a film festival ... an event inside of an event. This overlapping and intertwining of art is what makes the PAF special.

Watrous builds networks. "I am a supporter of the arts in Southern New England. I try to build relationships and connections with people in the arts community. And that's a broad term for me — the overarching goal is to reach out across that broad area. The arts festival connects people within the region or around Pawtucket." Apart from the festival, he even has his own personal network of artists under his wing. Watrous has seven children, six of whom are artists. "It'll be interesting to see where that hive of activity takes itself," he says referring to the bustling creativity that exists among children.

In terms of plans for the future, the committee's ambitions include casting their net even wider for the kinds of artists they draw in the future. The Pawtucket Arts Festival is a landmark in Pawtucket's history as an artistic city and giant step forward in its evolution. As the festival continues to grow, opening its arms wider each year and embracing an increasingly diverse array of artists, Pawtucket also becomes a more evolved and inclusive place to be.

Pawtucket Arts Festival runs thru October 4; pawtucketartsfestival.org