

Providence Tours go Viral: A monumental scavenger hunt



There is a lot of history hidden throughout Providence in plain sight. The memorials, monuments or statues you may encounter in your daily travels probably pass you by without you ever noticing what they stand for or where they came from.

The Providence Tour Company normally would take you on a fun-filled amble through local history. But under coronavirus, tours have understandably been a whole different animal (the company will do private tours, on request). Founder Bradly VanDerStad wanted to find a way for people to enjoy PVD history without a group or hands-on guide. There are plenty of self guided tours online, of course, but even the least droning of voices can lull you into a gentle sense of boredom when there's little challenge or interaction.

So Providence Tour Company developed an interactive scavenger hunt approach to bringing a little PVD history to life — a technique that's social-distance-friendly, but entertaining enough that you'll have fun with it long after quarantines have lifted. (We're betting PVD history will outlast the invasion by our viral antagonists.)

Motif writers had the honor of taking the first official Scavenger Hunt, and it worked exactly as promised. There were five clues, and it took us just over two hours — 30 minutes of which were spent arguing with our GPS about what state we were in, which was no fault of the game.

Each clue involved a little figuring out, even if we were already familiar with the location. Each was also linked to an historical celebrity of local proportions. Sometimes we could identify the person, but didn't realize there was a monument or where it was. You're encouraged to use the internet, so all things can eventually be puzzled out there. Just make sure your phones are charged — you don't want to be that person, going, "What does it say, what does it say?" while others thumb their phones.

We found all the puzzles engaging enough to make us talk to each other and having Googlers talk through the next clue while the driver brings the group to the current location was pretty efficient. You do have to work with your current germ circle — being in the same car is a must. We found it enjoyable with two, three or four people.

The clues were also themed to their periods in history, each doing a great job of invoking an era while staying fun and amusing. They included poems and songs and other indirect references.

Providence Tour Company emails a clue every 10 minutes; we fell behind pretty quickly (thanks GPS), but if you don't try a side-trip to Connecticut for no reason, the pace should keep you on track. Eventually you end up with a few clues you can try to solve in any order. They all lead to landmarks; once you've gotten close, they're pretty easy to identify. You take a selfie with them, and send that to the Tour Company. They give you a thumbs up or thumbs down, and there's a point system where — like a good escape room — you can ask for hints. Bradley gets right back to you if you have any questions or concerns. We only hit him up twice, but he responded immediately and with just the right level of cryptic-but-helpful. The driving around was pretty minimal; you cover much of the city, but not the farthest flung parts, and if you know where you're going each drive was 15 minutes or less. Surprisingly, as Rhode Islanders, we also didn't have much trouble finding parking at each spot!

Overall, it was a really fun way to spend a few hours — especially if the weather is nice — without having to get near anyone but while still exploring a sample of the rich history of Providence (Pro tip - no matter what the internet seems to tell you, no clues take you outside of the city). And once you're familiar with your set of landmarks, you'll probably spend months pointing them out to others whenever

you find yourself nearby.

Learn more at pvdtourco.com

They're Doing it Live!: Live music returns to Rooftop at the Providence G



As coronavirus took over the town, live music had to step aside for everyone's safety. But this weekend it returns! Rooftop at the Providence G has scheduled three live performers Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from 3 to 6pm.

On Friday, acoustic guitarist James Grande will perform as the sun sets. His intricate guitar playing will provide an excellent soundtrack to a rooftop cocktail. Saturday, Briana White takes the stage. Briana is the 2018 Motif Music Award winner for "Best Americana Singer/Songwriter." Her acoustic pop songs mixed with a loop pedal entrance audiences. Brian Cabral performs on Sunday. He's known for recording loops live so he gives the sound of a band while performing solo.

Performances take place Friday - Sunday, June 19 - 21, from 3 - 6pm. For more information on this weekend's performances, go to rooftopattheg.com

Music in the Sky: Rooftop at Providence G is holding a livestreamed benefit concert for restaurant workers

On Saturday, May 16, from 4 - 10pm, the Rooftop at Providence G will host six hours of livestreamed music to benefit the Rhode Island Hospitality Association's Restaurant Employee Relief Fund. Performing under strict social distancing guidelines with proper sanitization between performances, RI musicians and DJs will perform on the rooftop, entertaining viewers with a variety of music styles.

"These are challenging times for the hospitality industry," said Colin Geoffroy, president of G Hospitality. "That's why we've pulled together this unique, livestreamed benefit from the Rooftop to inspire some fun and connection, all while raising funds to help hospitality workers through the current crisis."

To view the event, go to Twitch.TV/RooftopattheG on Saturday, May 16 at 4pm. All proceeds will be donated to the [Rhode Island Hospitality Employee Relief Fund](#) for restaurant, hotel, and tourism employees who have been laid off and are facing financial hardship due to COVID-19.

DISCLOSURE: Motif is one of the sponsors of this event, as well as The Dance Floor DJs and Digital Alliance Music

Fun for the Kids: Children's entertainers keep the party going



Hey, parents! You're probably soothing a lot of tantrums and breaking up tons of fights and trying to ignore yet another eye-roll these days. If you are, it's cause kids are suffering an upheaval of their world just like you are. Only they can't drink about it.

To help inject a little stress-busting fun into their lives and give you a moment to yourself so you can stuff a handful of chips down your gullet or curl up in the fetal position unseen, we've rounded up a list

of some of the best streaming local entertainment available for the cute and quarantined.

Barrington Youth Soccer: Barrington Youth Soccer is keeping kids' skills sharp with soccer skills videos. Check them out at fb.com/BarringtonYouthSoccer

Bellani Maternity Virtual Dance Class: Join Miss Sandy on Tuesday and Friday mornings for a giggle-filled dance class. For more information: bellanimaternity.com

Bill Harley: Storyteller and musician Bill Harley hosts story and music sessions every Thursday at 1pm. For more information: fb.com/billharleystories

The Curated Crayon: Local art enthusiast Bre Churchhill Tindall makes short videos showing simple at-home art projects for kids using art supplies you probably have at home. Subscribe to The Curated Crayon's YouTube channel: youtu.be/UgdIThKukVU.

East Side Music Together: Hello, everybody! Check out live mini music classes from East Side Music Together. They'll be glad to see you! fb.com/ESMTPROV

Greg Lato: Children's musician Greg Lato continues to bring the fun via his Facebook page. Check it out at fb.com/greglatomusic

Keith Munslow: Storyteller and musician Keith Munslow has been hosting live family concerts via his Facebook page. And if your littles can't get enough of his brand of fun, then get excited for his soon-to-be-released album! For information: fb.com/MunslowMusic

Made By Me Cooking Classes: The Warren-based cooking teacher for kids has moved online. Visit her Facebook page for upcoming recipes and ingredient lists. fb.com/madebymecookingschool

Mark Binder's Books: Stuck at home with nothing to read? Providence author and storyteller Mark Binder is giving free ebooks to Rhode Island families. Choose between his classic, "Bed Time Story Book" (PK-1) "Kings, Wolves, Princesses and Lions," (grades 1-3) and "It Ate My Sister" (middle grades, middle school and adults with a sense of humor). Go to markbinder.com/intermission and at checkout, use the code MOTIF

Ms. Kat Reads Aloud: Ms. Kat from Slater Park Tennis reads stories to kids live via her Facebook and Instagram pages. Check out her schedule at fb.com/slater.park.tennis

Ricky Reads! Live!: Beloved local artist Ricky Rainbow Beard is telling 6pm bedtime stories with his array of puppets. See them live at fb.com/TheRainbowBeardShow

Rock a Baby: Join the puppets and talented musicians behind them who will entertain your little ones for a precious half hour so you can pee by yourself. fb.com/RockaBabyRI

Stories with Len: On Wednesdays and Fridays at 2pm, beloved storyteller Len Cabral shares live stories via his Facebook page. Check it out at fb.com/Len-Cabral-107036082662088

Trinity Rep Acting Classes: Trinity's classes go virtual! Tell the little actor in your life to check it out here: trinityrep.com/engagement/onlineclasses

Valerie Tutson: Storyteller extraordinaire Valerie Tutson is telling a daily story at 11:30am via her Facebook page. fb.com/valerie.tutson

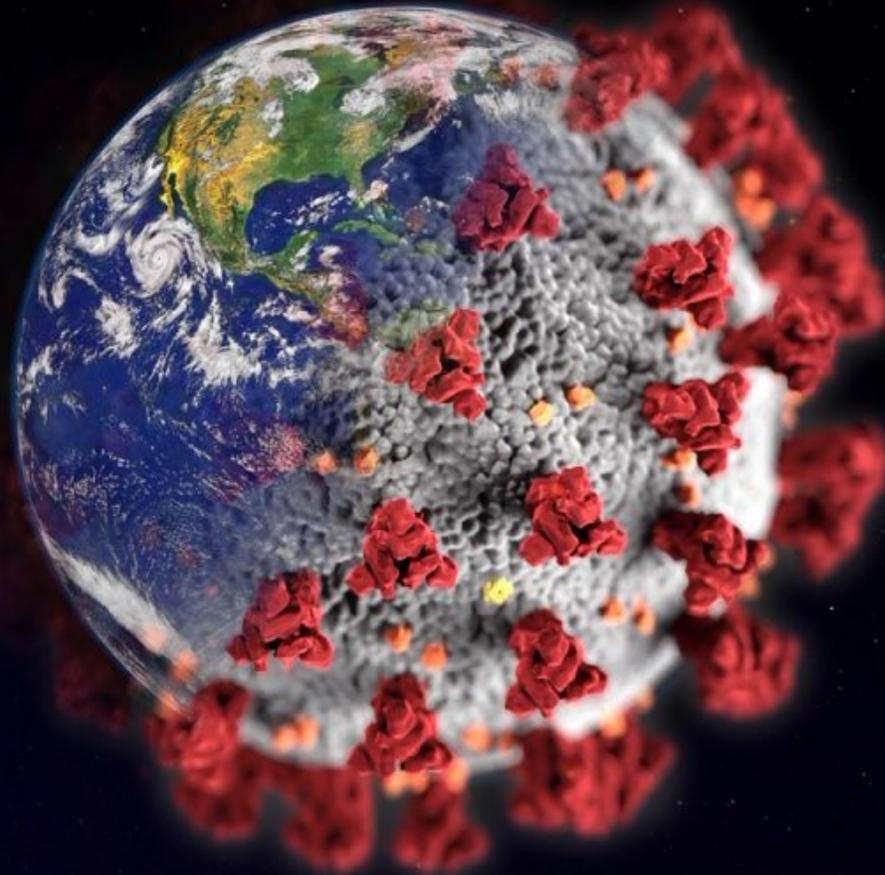
Zoo School: Join Roger Williams Zoo every Tuesday and Thursday at 2pm to learn about one of the animals living in the zoo and missing you. fb.com/RWPZoo

Local Libraries: Check out the Facebook page of your local library. Many of them are offering storytimes for kids.

[Life Inside a Global Pandemic: Local filmmakers team up to create a story for our](#)

times

IM Filmworks presents a World Premiere Film



FAR FROM PERFECT

LIFE INSIDE A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Written & Directed by
LENNY SCHWARTZ

Edited, Compiled & Also Directed by
NATHAN SUHER

Featuring a multitude of performers!

When local playwright, screenwriter and director Lenny Schwartz was faced with lockdown, he turned to art to help him cope. "I posted on Facebook, 'Hey! Who wants to do a project?' and people responded," he said.

Schwartz wrote more than 100 short pieces that he sent to more than 100 actors across the country who were tasked with filming their own performances on whatever camera they had at their disposal, with gentle guidance from Schwartz and producer and director Nathan Suher of IM Filmworks.

"Part of the fun is that the performers only know their part," said Schwartz of the filming process. Suher then took the resulting works and edited them into the feature-length *Far From Perfect: Life Inside A Global Pandemic*.

Schwartz said of his collaboration with Suher, "He's game for most things, which has led to us collaborating many times. When I had five responses to do this I messaged him. And he was in!" During that initial four-minute exchange, 15 more responses poured in.

"It is uplifting to see this many people rally from all corners of country to participate in a project that I know will be appreciated by those feeling the stress and anxiety of our trying times," said Suher.

The interconnected stories that make up the film range from funny to sad to emotional, but there is a through-line to the piece. "The loosely connected stories are all based around people in the middle of this pandemic. Each one leads on the next and it is sometimes funny, sometimes horrifying. But I do think at the end it is hopeful," said Schwartz.

Suher agrees that there's a positive message in the film's very existence. "This film has created a beautiful time-capsule of an event that will forever link all of us together."

The world premiere of Far From Perfect: Life Inside A Global Pandemic will take place as a Facebook watch party on Sat, Apr 18 at 8pm at fb.com/coronavirusfilm2020. It will then premiere on Amazon Prime on Apr 25. For more information or to join the watch party, go to fb.com/events/667936497355546

[An Ode to the Analog: The Linotype Daily project is part diary, part news filter and completely perfect](#)

CRAZY MAN SHOUTS
ON TWITTER, SWEARS
AT RALLY, THREATENS
NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS
AND MOCKS REFUGEES

 Republicans Silent on President

MARCH 29, 2019 FOR THE LINOTYPE DAILY
(Ed. Note: Save Slugs for Reprint!)

I am at DWRI Letterpress, and I am standing in front of a Linotype, the first automatic typesetting machine — a machine that Edison called the “Eighth Wonder of The World” — and over the whirring, clanking and spitting of its 3,000 moving parts, Dan Wood is explaining why it’s so wondrous, or in his words, “Completely insane! This started a whole new printing revolution: the second printing revolution after Gutenberg. Up until the 1880s, everything had to be handset — this machine made school textbooks affordable, and suddenly instead of two- or three-page newspapers you could have daily newspapers that were 20 or 30 pages long. It launched us into the information age.” At the turn of the century, the Linotype was a marvel of modern engineering; it was, in Dan’s words, “breathtakingly fast...and now it’s like, so, so slow.”

Dan would know. He’s the artist behind The Linotype Daily, and for 366 consecutive days (ending on Leap Day), he produced a new “print, card, pencil or other Linotype-created work” using this fin de siècle marvel. Dan’s website describes The Linotype Daily as “part diary, part news filter.” He had a number of print subscribers, and a spot in the World’s Fair Gallery, but many encountered the project through the Instagram account @thelinotypedaily.

Dan’s daily posts toggled between the political (“PRESIDENT PARDONS WAR CRIMINAL,”) and the personal (“TEENAGE WHISTLEBLOWER ALLEGES HER DAD ATE THE PEANUT BUTTER”), the local (“PRONK!”) and the national (“HONG KONG, BEIRUT, SANTIAGO! MILLIONS CONTINUE PROTESTS”). The voice of The Linotype Daily is that of a hard-nosed reporter of bygone days: authoritative and bombastic (“When you put it in print, people can’t hear my ‘every-sentence-is-a-question’ inflection”). The fonts, classic early-to-mid-century newspaper typefaces, carry a similar power, as does the printed word itself (“People think: ‘they wouldn’t print it if it wasn’t true.’”).

There’s a wry irony in the juxtaposition between that authority and the content of the posts themselves, which reflect the dizzying, haphazard tone of our hyperactive news cycle (“THE WORLD IS STILL A MESS”). “It’s been such a weird year,” Dan says. “Day after day it’s worse and worse and everything is just so bizarre.” That absurdity comes out in the Daily, sometimes as whimsy (a Democratic Debate scorecard modeled after an Olympic Figure Skating card), sometimes as despair (“I CAN’T KEEP UP!”), often as both.

Dan grabs a loose Daily from a nearby stack and passes it to me (“DEATH EATERS TRIUMPHANT! REPUBLICANS SILENT AS PURGES CONTINUE”). I run my fingers over the debossed letters as he muses: “I’m printing a hundred copies of this, but on the Instagram hundreds, thousands, whatever, all these people are going to see a digital replication of this handmade thing, but because it’s handmade, they’re going to spend more time looking at it than if it were just, like, a meme. Which is a weird thing. But people like things that are handmade. The amount of time it took for you to make it seeps into its meaning somehow.”

Part of what makes The Linotype Daily intriguing is the allure of the tangible. The studio itself is a

sensory playground: the lead bubbling in the crucible of the Linotype (in which old type slugs are melted and reborn); the chunk-chunk of the Heidelberg spitting out copies (“I can’t watch anyone using this machine because it looks like you’re sticking your hand in it,” Dan says, as he seems to stick his hand in it); the paper invitations and cards and posters that line the walls (including all 366 Linotype Dailies).

The studio is a veritable museum of archaic machinery, and the project is, to some extent, an ode to the analog. Making a single Linotype Daily took Dan between one and five hours: writing the post, setting the type, loading and operating the machines, selecting the typeface. Dan points to a card that says “IMPEACHED” — “This 96 point Gothic is a really weird typeface, it’s got this playful joy, it’s really strange.”

That so many people encountered and engaged with this staunchly old-fashioned art on social media adds a layer of irony that Dan seems both bemused and fascinated by: “It’s very, very strange.”

“[These days] there’s so much information that we’re not even capable of sorting through it ... with the project it was kind of like ... maybe taking the time to do this little thing will be a way to sort of navigate the information overload that we’re all living in.” Social media gave him a chance to turn that sorting, the processing of a chaotic year, into a dialogue with his audience. “I feel like speaking honestly is the artist’s only job,” Dan says. “Just doing that is creating some meaning. If you’re doing something you feel genuine about, other people will appreciate that.”

If you’d like to see The Linotype Daily irl, it will be part of a show at Galerie le Domaine (145 Wayland Ave, PVD), called “Our Ephemeral World: from Plants to Paper to Print,” on the first Gallery Night of 2020, March 19 from 6 - 8pm. The posts are also available for purchase through dwriletterpress.net

[Motif Tattoo Awards](#)

We love your ink, and the Motif Tattoo Awards is your chance to honor the artistry of local ink slingers who used you as their canvas.

Be sure to vote for your favorite tattoo artists at motifri.com/tattoo-2020, then come to our awards celebration on Monday, March 9 at 6pm at Alchemy (71 Richmond St, PVD). The awards will be hosted

by tattoo artist Dani Ryan, who appeared on Season 12 of “Ink Master” and wields her iron at 1001 Troubles in Warren, and co-hosted by *Motif* contributor Crimson Al-Khemia.

Warm up for the main event by checking out our roundtable of local tattoo greats, hosted by Al-Khemia.

For more info go to motifri.com/2020tattooroundtable

[25th Annual Langston Hughes Community Poetry Reading: If you had been there. “...you would know why”](#)



Emily Ruth Hazel, honorary poet;
Photo credit: AIJ Media

The sounds of steel pan, keyboard, bass and vocals poured out of the Providence Career & Technical Academy Auditorium as hundreds of standup citizens glided inside. They were there to hear 67 people present Langston Hughes’ works, as well as experience some surprises.

Many attendees returned for a third or 20th visit. Sylvia Ann Soares was presenting for the 12th time in 21 years. She said she was “delighted to see the varied ethnicity reflected in Langston’s poems performed by immigrants and others in their language besides English.” There were beautifully dressed

children tuning in and out of the tribute to the poet. There was a touch of harmonica, some snapping, singing, drumming, some blues ... and due to careful listening and collaboration, at one point we could hear the "Seascape. "

The event began from the moment one walked into the door, greeted by volunteers of all ages who were professionally welcoming. Old and new friends shook hands and hugged, families milled together, and six generations warmed the auditorium. Deborah Spears Moorehead performed the Opening Song. "A prayer that came to me at 4am," she explained before blessing the space with "A Prayer for the People."
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One of the quintessential "community" moments took place next. As April Brown and Valerie Tutson prepared to lead "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," there came the sound of a stunning 10-month-old baby. Tutson said, "Joya wants to sing the Negro National Anthem," and she held her baby on stage as the entire congregation sang along with them.

A Biographical Moment, Rochel Garner Coleman first dazzled the crowd by quipping that he thought the preceding invocation was going to be "Ain't No Stopping Us Now." Later, when he quoted Hughes, some reflected on the moments of collective guffaws. "Humor is laughing at what you haven't got when you ought to have it." This day was one of celebration of Hughes, and it included laughter, joy, pain and contemplation. Rochel described Langston Hughes as "the original jazz" and the "JZ of Harlem." He gave a detailed list of the vocations and let the listeners know that Langston Hughes was far from just a poet. Rochel eloquently wove wit and knowledge, including the ominous question, "What would [Hughes] think of immigration issues, 1994 Rwanda Genocide..." [Langston Hughes lived on earth until 1967.] All the while, Rochel's voice and the instrumentals played in tandem. This was an eloquent and thorough account of Langston Hughes delivered with a passion usually reserved for eulogies. This was a birthday party.

Many were curious to get to see and hear the Honorary Poet, Emily Ruth Hazel. She had performed the previous night for Funda Fest's event "Grown Folk Story Telling." She submitted to the RFP from Pasadena, California. The next 67 poems (plus Hazel's) were presented in three different categories. The turnout for an authentic community, in the truest sense of the word, emulates much of what Langston Hughes celebrated in his writing. April Brown explains, "There is an elegance, because of the time period he represents. I wanted it to have a very spiritual component to it."

As can be expected, not every presenter was able to attend. If Ray Rickman were there, it would have been his 25th year presenting. It seems that most people, once they know about the event, attend, dare it be said, religiously. Sidney E. Okashige couldn't believe that she had never heard of the event. "Why didn't I know about such an amazing event?" Well, someone told her, and that someone is writing this article. Spread the word. For those who are a little down or need to reboot their spirits, this is a sanctuary where all faith can be restored. "The power of Langston Hughes' writing," as musician Becky

Bass stated, along with the inclusive community mentality, were ways in which the Langston Hughes Community Poetry Event is to be revered. There were 10 languages represented onstage, ages from one to ageless and dedicated teenagers who represented their age group with dignity and confidence, executive directors and teachers, visiting artists and families with small children and grandparents, donors and volunteers.

Emily Ruth Hazel talked about how “If you don’t show up, there will be an empty place” and the gentleness of being “swaddled” and how to “practice listening.” She writes about how she “waited to be chosen last” and about “high-profile and highly profiled.” She talked about America and how “you’re welcome here” and an “America still worth singing about.”

As in “Words Like Freedom,” by Langston Hughes, read by Sheila Jackson, it is in our best interest to read these poems, to talk about them, and to listen to them.

Messages from Beyond: Ocean State Paranormal Society raises money for preservation

When most people think of the ghosts of the past, they don’t imagine literal, well, ghosts. The Ocean State Paranormal Society is turning that all on its head with their upcoming fundraising event that will raise money for an historic property, all while giving attendees access to loved ones from beyond the grave.

Founded in 2012, the Ocean State Paranormal Society has dedicated themselves to helping private property owners determine if the bump they hear during the night is a ghost - or something as simple as a house settling. Just to show you how hands-on they are, there is always an integral part of research that comes with each case. A lot of claims of the paranormal have to do with the idea that there was a tragic death or, very much like the movie *Poltergeist*, some sort of ancient burial ground. Ocean State Paranormal makes sure to find out the facts - where a property has come from and what has happened to it before jumping to conclusions. Buddy Thayer, founder of Ocean State Paranormal, fully supports this research and the history behind the haunting. He says, “The idea of marrying history and the paranormal has been a thing since way before me. Often times when researching the paranormal, I find myself deeply engrossed in historical research.” With the knowledge that you can’t have history without ghosts, or maybe it’s the other way around, the Ocean State Paranormal Society, a non-profit, has now

dedicated itself to helping preserve the past for future generations by letting the paranormal meet preservation. With its yearly fundraising event series, the society allows participants the opportunity to speak to a passed loved one in an historic property. All proceeds from the event then go toward the historical preservation of the event site. Past events have been held at the old Kent County Jail in East Greenwich, which raised \$2,700 for the East Greenwich Historical Preservation Society and before that, at the Varnum Memorial Armory (where this year's event is being held) in 2018 which raised \$3,000.

With the event coming back to the Varnum Memorial Armory, guests will get to peek inside a beautiful red brick building located in East Greenwich. The building began construction in 1913 on the site of what had been the Rhode Island Central Bank. Construction was inspired by the Varnum Continentals, who wanted to instill patriotism and history through the building - with the goal of reminding the public what the American Revolution had meant to this country. The building housed drill halls, meeting rooms, and up until 1996, was also home to the Rhode Island National Guard. It currently serves as a military museum.

But - for one night only - Saturday, February 15, from 6:30 to 8:30pm, the Ocean State Paranormal Society will bring its idea of preservation and paranormal together by holding a gallery reading featuring medium and spiritual healer Roland Comtois, who is known for his "purple paper messages."

While there will be paranormal investigations in the armory, the gallery reading is the main event - where Comtois will appear with messages from beyond that were channeled through him onto purple sheets of paper. It's here that he hopes that these messages will find their homes, meaning the person that they are intended for. Comtois' website shows messages that he has received from the beyond and a few places where the messages have landed. One, for example, found its recipient in June 2019 in Rhode Island. Comtois receives these messages, but he never knows who they belong to. This event will promote his goal of letting these purple papers find their way home and will share how audiences can tap into their own intuitive abilities. Ocean State Paranormal Founder Buddy Thayer says, "This guy is the real deal. I have personally been enlightened when he pulled me out of a crowd of 200 and told me specific details about passed loved ones. He doesn't ask you cold questions or make guesses, Roland speaks directly to you and knows things that only you know or that loved one would know."

See for yourself if you have a purple paper waiting for you - all while supporting the preservation of a true Rhode Island landmark. I mean, no matter what happens, you'll have a hauntingly good time.

Tickets for the 18+ event can be purchased on Eventbrite or via the Ocean State Paranormal Society Facebook Page and all proceeds go to the Varnum Memorial Armory.

[A Story to Tell: Funda Fest celebrates storytelling in its 22nd year](#)

Funda Fest, the annual celebration of black storytelling presented by Rhode Island Black Storytellers (RIBS), will take place throughout the state from January 25 through February 2. The Festival is in its 22nd year. “‘Funda’ means ‘to teach and to learn’ in Zulu and Kiswahili,” explained RIBS co-founder and executive director Valerie Tutson. “We got started many years ago when the Rhode Island Foundation was doing some black arts programming in support of a project that was called I’ll Make Me A World, so they were really trying to celebrate black arts and artists and community. That year we did one weekend — I think we did four school performances. Now we average about 40 all across the state.”

This year’s festival will kick off with a free family storytelling concert on Saturday, January 25 from 1 - 3pm at the North Kingstown Free Library. That evening, RIBS will be at The Universalist Unitarian Congregation of South County for another storytelling concert (doors at 6:30, 7pm show). The next day the festival will move to Providence, with a performance of their program Words and Music at the South Side Cultural Center from 4 - 6pm.

“This year, we’ve got a new-to-town artist who we’re going to be featuring, Sharrief Muhammad, who is a spoken word artist and musician,” said Tutson. “He’s teamed up with some other local musicians, and they’re going to do a musical and spoken word set, along with some of the poets who are being sponsored in partnership with the Langston Hughes Community Poetry Reading.” Those include South African poet Kwezie Becker and New York based poet Gentile Ramirez.

From January 27 to 31, RIBS will bring Funda Fest to students across the state as part of their Storytellers in the Schools program. “One thing that’s new this year is we’re going to be at the Providence Performing Arts Center as part of their school series, which we’re excited about,” said Tutson. That performance will reach more than 2,000 middle school students from across the region.

The second weekend of the festival will begin with another free family storytelling concert at the YWCA in Woonsocket on January 30 at 6:30pm. Then, on January 31, the festival’s annual Liar’s Contest and Awful Awful Singing Contest will be held at the American Legion in Providence (7 doors, 8pm contest). On February 1, at the Southside Cultural Center in PVD, the festival will hold a free family fun day, with a storytelling workshop from 10am - noon, lunch and marketplace at noon and a family storytelling concert from 1 - 3pm. That night, at the Providence Career and Technical Academy (PCTA), RIBS will

present Storytelling for Grown Folk (7 doors, music, and marketplace, 8pm show). The festival will conclude with the 25th annual Langston Hughes Community Poetry reading, also at the PTCA (1pm).

This year, Funda Fest is proud to host internationally acclaimed South African storyteller Gcina Mhlophe. "It's a big thrill to have her here at Funda," said Tutson, who met Mhlophe in South Africa and has stayed friends with her for many years. Mhlophe's distinguished career spans more than three decades of work as a storyteller, freedom fighter, activist, actress, poet, playwright, director and author. Recently, she was featured in the award-winning documentary *Liyana*. In the film, she guides a number of Swazi children, orphaned by the AIDS crisis, in creating a story based on their own experiences. She has traveled extensively since 1988, telling stories in four of South Africa's languages (English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Xhosa). Mhlophe has called storytelling "the basis of all cultures and the mother of all art forms," and "a way to keep history alive."

Funda Fest's enduring presence in Rhode Island is a testament to that fundamental importance of storytelling, and its capacity to shape experience. "We always want people to come away from the festival feeling like they experienced the power of storytelling," explains Tutson. "In black tradition, storytelling is not just a sit back and listen kind of thing, it's really a community experience. So we want people to feel engaged. And we always want to celebrate the diversity of black voices, and to provide an alternative experience to the stories that many of us see and hear about black folks every day on the news. It's always our hope that black people feel good about themselves and their culture because of something that they heard, and we hope that all people learn something."

For a complete schedule, go to ribsfest.org or motifri.com/funda22schedule