

PVD Lady Project empowers in style with their Summer Guide

by Despina Durand

Men get the run of most professional spaces. But Providence knows that men are not the only ones exploring new ventures and ideas in the professional world. And the PVD Lady Project is here to prove it.

The Lady Project started in 2012 when local business women Sierra Barter and Julie Sygiel, then 24 and 25, decided that professional women in Rhode Island needed a space to get together.

The Lady Project kicked off their Summer Gift Guide (here) with a party at the Providence Marriott Downtown, poolside, with drinks, nibbles, and a crowd of well-dressed women from all walks of life.

The Summer Guide's main spread featured Lady Project members.

"The goal was to showcase women doing amazing things, what Lady Project already does," said art director Mihaela Hinayon. She, along with GoLocalProv's Kate Nagel, Craftland's Kristin Crane, and photographer Brittanny Taylor spoke as part of a 3×3.

A 3×3 at the Lady Project invites three women from different backgrounds, to talk for three minutes, on a topic. In keeping with the summer theme, the ladies were asked to talk about their favorite things to do in Rhode Island in the summer. The suggestions ranged from hikes and picnics to making the rounds of the Providence bars. Crane's list of "food, wine, outdoors" was a hit.

The guide showcases a couple of businesses run by Lady Project members, as well as articles, in addition to the gift guide and a list of summer suggestions from Lady Project members.

In the words of PVD Lady Project's Communication and PR manager, Piya Sarawgi, the Lady Project is an opportunity for women, especially young women who might not have a professional direction yet, to meet with other women who are pursuing their goals, professionally and otherwise.

In a state as small as Rhode Island it can feel like one has met everyone already.

"Every event I meet someone and I ask, 'How did I not know you?'" Barter said.

Most new faces, she explained, come on the recommendation of a friend, coworker, or boss.

The goal is to get passionate and creative women together and help them form connections, both as interpersonally and professionally.

"You realize you're not alone in what you're doing," she said.

One of the more gratifying experiences for Barter is when the Lady Project connects people in a professional way. Because the Lady Project is volunteer based, they can't pay the people who work for them. So when someone asks her, "Do you know anyone who does this?" and she can hook someone up with a paying gig, it is a rush.

The Lady Project is expanding beyond the bounds of little Rhody, this year chapters opened in Boston and in New Haven. At the Summer Gift Guide celebration Barter announced that new chapters were preparing to open in Nashua, NH, and New York City. Though the network is growing, the larger non-profit, Lady Project.org, will keep its home in the Ocean State.

“I like it because it’s a self-selecting group of women,” said social media intern Natalie Shay, who, as a student at Johnson and Wales, met Barter in the university’s communications office, “Everyone there is interesting, because everyone wants to be there.”

Barter’s advice for women of all ages, looking to break out of their current job, or into a new one is to start before you’re ready.

“You’re never going to have a good age to do it. You’re never too young or too old.”

PVD Lady Project will be hosting an “Active Night” at the Barrington Pilates & studio 47 on June 26 to benefit Girls on the Run RI. [More here.](#)

Photo by Brittany Taylor.