

# **ECHILDREN** By Lucy Kirkwood

# APRIL 27 - MAY 14

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# **THE CHILDREN**

by LUCY KIRKWOOD

directed by STEVE KIDD

### APRIL 27 - MAY 14, 2023

SET DESIGN/ PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT Jessica Hill Kidd

COSTUME DESIGN David T. Howard LIGHTING DESIGN David Roy

SOUND DESIGN Peter Sasha Hurowitz DIALECT COACH Donnla Hughes STAGE MANAGEMENT Robin Grady\*

THE CHILDREN (KIRKWOOD) is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

FUNDING PROVIDED IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE RHODE ISLAND STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, THROUGH AN APPROPRIATION BY THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AND PRIVATE FUNDERS.



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### **THE CHILDREN**

#### This play is performed without an intermission.

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#### **SETTING**

A small cottage on England's east coast. A summer's evening.

#### **THE COMPANY**

Rose	Phyllis Kay*
Hazel	Candice Brown*
Robin	<b>Richard Donelly*</b>

#### **CREATIVE TEAM**

Assistant to the Director Assistant Stage Manager Lighting Design Associate Yoga Consultant Dance Choreographer Technical Director Assistant Technical Director Production Assistant Master Electrician Electricians Carpenters Nola Fox, Eddy Tavares

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### **Q&A WITH DIRECTOR STEVE KIDD & ACTOR PHYLLIS KAY**

by Artistic Director Tony Estrella



# Steve, Gamm patrons have admired your acting on our stage since *The Crucible* almost 20 years ago. How does it feel to be making your Gamm directing debut?

SK: Yeah, it's really exciting! Actors who work here for the first time will be the first to tell you that there's something very special about The Gamm. They consistently describe a unique culture of joy and support. That legacy has been intentionally cultivated by directors at The Gamm. The work is hard and the standard is high, but it's rounded out by respect and a shared

purpose. We understand how fortunate we are to do the work we love for audiences who care. I've learned so much from Gamm directors and gratefully carry their examples.

# Phyllis, many Gamm patrons have admired your work as a Trinity Rep resident artist for decades, even while you've been a patron and supporter here yourself. Yet, only now are we lucky enough to have you on our stage! How does it feel?

PK: Everything just lined up beautifully and it feels exactly right. Tony, I'm about to praise you to your face, so settle in. I think you're a visionary artistic director. Over the last 20 (!) years, your seasons have included astonishing choices, with something for everyone who identifies as *human*. I am so grateful and happy to be working on this play with you and so many people I love.

### *The Children* was written in 2016 for characters in their 60s, but Kirkwood doesn't specify a time for the play. Do you think that's intentional?

SK: I do! If in 40 years this play is still being produced, I'm sure many of the same tensions will exist. So it speaks to audiences beyond our lifetime. That said, certain cultural and scientific references ground it somewhere around the mid-2010s. The three characters are part of the baby boom generation who had a significant impact on social change in the UK in the late part of the 20th century. They made decisions based on the ideology of the day which associated abundance, growth and materialism with success. Those beliefs are still pervasive. But there's a much greater awareness, especially among younger people, that those values and habits often run counter to societal priorities like addressing climate change. Kirkwood brings that huge conversation down to a single choice these characters must make in a tiny seaside cottage.

### The play is thematically concerned with our delicate relationship with the environment. What makes theater such a compelling form for engaging big ideas?

SK: I think we go to the theater for different reasons and with different expectations for ourselves and fellow audience members. It's one of the few places where we're asked and expected to turn off our cell phones to protect the focus of everyone in the room. I appreciate that despite the ever-present pull of our phones, we still reserve the theater as a space for undivided attention and collective empathy. The real-time structure of *The Children* takes that even further. We meet the characters when the lights come up and we are all in it together until the play ends. No scene changes to looks at your program, no intermission to check your phone and think about your life after the theater.

I've loved some movies and TV shows about frightening futures because of climate change, but I find myself changing the channel if I sense there's a "lesson" coming. Plays depend less on visual images to draw the viewer in and drive a point home. It's the language spoken by live actors that engages our imagination and makes us weigh the conflicts and actions of the characters against our own. Would we make the same choices? Maybe we are surprised by how we feel or think. Maybe we find that we are more selfish or benevolent than we thought. Regardless, I think a theatrical experience is more likely to generate conversation and initiate change when we leave the theater.

#### What are the challenges of approaching a play about an important social issue?

PK: Ultimately this is a play about people living in a time where they must confront both mundane and unimaginable complications. I approach this work like any other story. It's all human problems and I try to figure out how to solve them from my character's point of view.

### It's been three years since COVID-19 killed millions of people worldwide and led to shutdowns and mask mandates. Might today's audiences experience this play differently than pre-pandemic audiences?

SK: I think so. In reading the play for the first time with the cast, I was brought back to the summer of 2020 when we no longer had to "shelter in place." We were between surges and able to spend much of our lives outdoors. Inconvenient practices had become more or less routine, like standing 6 feet apart, masking up, incessant hand sanitizing, etcetera. There was almost a sense of normalcy. But there was also massive uncertainty. Would kids go back to school? Would businesses reopen? When could we fly again? Would there be a vaccine? To me, that period is similar to the sort of "familiar uncertainty" that Rose, Hazel and Robin are experiencing in *The Children*. But unlike most of us, those characters have an opportunity to respond in a way that could make a huge difference in the lives of others now and in the future.

### For such a serious and frankly terrifying subject, *The Children* is surprisingly funny! How does humor work in the world of this play?

PK: What I like about Kirkwood's writing is that each of her characters has a distinctive voice. They all use humor to deflect and defend, but in very different ways. I'm not crazy about plays in which all the characters' words seem to have identical rhythms, tone and content. Same, same, same. I see it alot! *The Children* is the best kind of material to work on because Kirkwood seems to have avoided this trap.







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#### by Associate Artistic Director Rachel Walshe

### "I understand, I do understand now, that for the world not to . . . completely fall apart, that we can't have everything we want just because we want it." Rose in *The Children*

On Friday, April 14 it will be 85 degrees here in Rhode Island. The average high temperature for that date is 57 degrees, according to the Weather Channel. In New England, mid-80s are mid-August temperatures, not mid-April. And, if you're anything like me, you're paralyzed by this kind of information.

I know global warming is happening. And it's bad. I read the news. I watch the documentaries. I put solar panels on our house this year with a low interest loan, which earns me a few unanticipated bucks each month. I also get to signal my green virtues to the neighborhood, which is an embarrassing but authentic bonus. But let's be honest, shall we? Am I, or any of you, making any real, measurable sacrifices?

I can't think of a creature comfort (drive-through service, plastic baggies, gasoline for my two cars) that I would reliably give up. Most so-called sacrifices such as reusable lunch bags and metal straws simply expand our carbon footprint, swapping one vice for another. Philosopher and historian Yuval Noah Harari summarizes this condition aptly: "One of history's few iron laws is that luxuries tend to become necessities and to spawn new obligations. Once people get used to a certain luxury, they take it for granted. Then they begin to count on it. Finally they reach a point where they can't live without it."

Let's revisit that word "sacrifice." It's a theme squarely at the center of Lucy Kirkwood's *The Children*. Her characters must reckon with the calculus I've outlined, albeit against a more urgent set of circumstances. This play boldly asks: How much are you willing to give up to benefit people you will never know or a world you will never inhabit? Personally, I've substituted the notion of sacrifice for inconvenience, like spending a bit more time and money harvesting solar energy or drinking tap water instead of bottled. Merriam Webster shames my delusional sense of that word: *Sacrifice, noun: (1) an act of offering to a deity something precious, especially the killing of a victim on an altar; (2) something offered in sacrifice; (3) destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.* That definition is far from buying or budgeting one's way into a greener world. Sacrifice, strictly speaking, requires the spilling of blood. It requires pain and violence and, frankly, death.

The characters of *The Children* aren't Greta Thunberg types on the starting blocks of their social justice races for change. They are men and women in their 60s, identifiable as baby boomers who have participated in widespread movements for positive social progress like racial justice, gender equality, and workers' rights. They've also perpetuated a cultural ethos of expansion and growth, of materialism and wealth accumulation. Kirkwood's play makes the surprising assertion that the future of our planet lies not in the energy and outrage of youth, but in the quiet, earnest sacrifices of its most mature inhabitants. In *The Children*, Kirkwood reminds us that we still need parents. The follies of youth—no matter how bold and energetic—are insufficient when it comes to setting a course for the survival of the species. Sacrifice demands more than solar panels or protests. It will require destruction and surrender, Kirkwood insists, and the offering of something precious for the sake of something bigger than us all.

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## ABOUT THE COMPANY (in alphabetical order)



#### Candice Brown\*, Hazel

Previous Gamm Roles: JQA/George Washington/Abigail Adams/Louisa Adams in JQA Other Theaters: Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Actors' Shakespeare Project, New York Theatre Workshop, American Repertory Theatre, Boston Playwrights' Theatre, Utah Shakespearean Festival, Three Rivers Shakespeare Festival, Cape Repertory Theatre, Bristol Valley Theatre Company Other: Candice joined the musical theater division at Boston Conservatory at Berklee in 2004, where she teaches courses in advanced voice and acting. She owns VoiceWorks in Milton, Mass. and coaches acting and voice privately in the Boston and NY area. At The Gamm,

she has worked as both dialect and vocal coach on numerous productions including *Describe The Night, Ironbound,* and *An Octoroon.* She teaches in the musical theater division of Boston Conservatory at Berklee.



#### Richard Donelly\*, Robin

Previous Gamm Roles: Saul Kimmer in *True West*, Serberyakov in *Uncle Vanya*, Sims/Papa in *The Nether*, Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale*, Gravedigger/Idiot Beggar/King's Justice in *Morality Play*, Duncan/Old Siward in *Macbeth*, Man #1 in *The Big Meal*, Sterling in *Mauritius*, King Philip II in *Don Carlos*, Dr. James Bentham in *Radio Free Emerson*, Porfiry/other roles in *Crime and Punishment*, Edward de Vere in *The Beard of Avon*, Peter Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, Caesar in *Julius Caesar* **Other Theaters:** Wilbury Group, Rhode Island Shakespeare Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, Playwrights Horizons NYC, The Charles Theatre Boston, 2nd Story

Theatre **TV/Film:** Don't Look Up, Polka King, Body of Proof, Brotherhood, Providence, Law & Order, Side by Each, Urban Relics, Mystic River, American Hustle, Black Mass, Manchester by the Sea



#### Phyllis Kay\*, Rose

Previous Gamm Roles: Debut Other Theaters: A Trinity Rep resident acting company member since 1991, Phyllis' favorite productions include Macbeth, Lend Me a Tenor, One for the Money, Angels in America, We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!, The Beauty Queen of Leenane, The Cider House Rules, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Cherry Orchard, All The King's Men, Cabaret, King Lear, House & Garden, The Hunchback of Seville, Appropriate, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Death of a Salesman, Into the Breeches!, Tiny Beautiful Things, and Scrooge in A Christmas Carol. She has worked at several regional theaters, most recently at Huntington Theatre Company and

Arena Stage. Film: Smithereens, By A Thread, Federal Hill, Brooklyn Rules, Meet Dave, The Proposal, Fairhaven, Some Freaks, and Polka King TV: Miller's Court, Law & Order, The Sopranos, Body of Proof, and Kevin Can F\*\*k Himself Other: Phyllis attended Emerson College, L'University de Lausanne, and Brown University. She is a graduate of The Neighborhood Playhouse and a 2015 Ten Chimneys Fellow.

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## **ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM**

#### Lucy Kirkwood, Playwright

Lucy Kirkwood is an acclaimed British playwright and screenwriter. In 2009, her play It Felt Empty When the Heart Went at First but Is Alright Now was produced by Clean Break Theatre Co. at the Arcola Theatre. It was nominated for the Evening Standard Award for Best Newcomer and made Lucy joint winner of the John Whiting Award, NSFW premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 2012. Chimerica premiered at the Almeida Theatre in 2013 and subsequently transferred to the West End, winning Best New Play at the 2014 Olivier and Evening Standard Awards, the Critics Circle Award and the Susan Smith Blackburn Award. In 2016 The Children premiered at the Royal Court. London. The play opened on Broadway in December 2017 and was nominated for a Tony Award. Mosquitoes, presented by special arrangement with Manhattan Theatre Club, opened at the National Theatre in 2017. Lucy also writes for screen, including episodes of the British comedy-drama series Skins.

#### Jessica Corsentino, Assistant Stage Manager

Favorite Gamm ASM credits include *Sweat, Describe the Night, It's a Wonderful Life* (2021,2022), *An Octoroon, The Night Watch, A Doll's House Part 2, Incognito, JQA, Escaped Alone, Gloria, The Importance of Being Earnest, A Human Being Died that Night, As You Like It, The Children's Hour* and *American Buffalo.* Jess is also The Gamm's education coordinator.

#### Robin Grady\*, Stage Manager

At The Gamm, Robin stage managed *Describe the Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream, It's A Wonderful Life* (2019,21,22), *A Lie Agreed Upon, Assassins, The Night Watch, The Night of the Iguana*, and many others. Regional credits include Trinity Rep, Barrington Stage Company, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Great Lakes Theater, Huntington Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Lyric Stage Company, Wheelock Family Theatre, Ocean State Theater Company, Gloucester Stage Company, Theatre By The Sea, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Reagle Music Theatre and Fiddlehead Theatre Company. Robin has a B.F.A. in stage management from University of Rhode Island.

#### David T. Howard, Costume Designer

David is a professor in the University of Rhode Island Theatre Department. At The Gamm Theatre he has collaborated on over 43 productions including: *A Doll's House, Part 2; Uncle Vanya, The Importance of Being Earnest, Arcadia, Describe the Night,* and *A Streetcar Named Desire.* At URI, David has designed 39 productions including: *Silent Sky, Mary Poppins,*  The School for Lies, As You Like It, La Bête, and Les Liaisons Dangereuses. Exhibits of his work: "Gilding the Shoestrings III," Providence Campus of URI; "The Corset As Art: Past and Present," Southern Utah Museum of Art; "The Big Squeeze: The Corset As Art," ZAZ10TS Gallery, NYC.

#### Donnla Hughes, Dialect Coach

Donnla made her U.S. directing debut at The Gamm with *Faith Healer*, for which she also served as dialect coach. At The Gamm, she appeared in *Describe The Night* (Yevgenia), *Ironbound* (Darja), and *A Lie Agreed Upon* (Katherine Stockman). Other acting credits include Ensemble Theatre, Santa Barbara; Geffen Playhouse Theatre, L.A.; A Noise Within, L.A.; National Theatre, U.K.; Bristol Old Vic Theatre, U.K.; Shakespeare's Globe, U.K.; Leicester Square Theatre, U.K.; Soho Theatre, U.K.; Cock Tavern, U.K.; Kings HeadTheatre, U.K.; and Druid Theatre Company, Ireland. Originally from Galway, Ireland, Donnla trained at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. She is a Carleton Hobbs award winner and was a long-standing member of the BBC Radio Drama rep.

#### Peter Sasha Hurowitz, Sound Designer

Peter is in his 25th season at Trinity Repertory Company where he serves as the resident sound designer and sound engineer. At Trinity he has designed over 80 shows including *The Inheritance, black odyssey* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. At The Gamm he designed for *Bad Jews, Ironbound, An Octoroon* (sound and video) and *Assassins* (sound). Peter also designed Commonwealth Shakespeare Company's 2019 production of *Cymbeline* on Boston Common.

#### Jessica Hill Kidd\*, Set Designer &

**Director of Production** 

This is Jessica's 14th season at The Gamm, where she was scenic designer for *Sweat, Ironbound, Escaped Alone & Come and Go, Gloria, As You Like It, Incognito, Arcadia, A Streetcar Named Desire,* and others. She was co-scenic designer for Commonwealth Shakespeare Co.'s *Cymbeline.* Jessica is also The Gamm's prop designer and scenic painter. She has a B.I.A. and a B.F.A. in interior architecture from Rhode Island School of Design and has worked as a senior project manager for several award-winning architectural firms. She is owner of Studio Hill, specializing in interior and set designs.

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#### Steve Kidd, Director

This is Steve's directorial debut at The Gamm. Previous directing credits include Lungs and The Caretaker at Wilbury Theatre Group. Steve has appeared onstage in each of the last 20 seasons at The Gamm. Some favorite roles include Stan in Sweat. Tommy in Ironbound, Torvald in A Doll's House Part 2. Austin in True West, Astrov in Uncle Vanya, Thomas Hanlon in A Skull in Connemara. Mitch in A Streetcar Named Desire, and Christian in Festen. He has also performed at The Drill Hall (London), Boston Center for the Arts, Boston Playwrights Theatre, Lyric Stage (Boston). and Trinity Rep. Steve is Chair of the Performing Arts Department at Moses Brown School. He holds a B.A. from Colby College and an M.A. from Brown University. Steve performs his solo-show Sigh/Omelas across New England and is the 2008 Recipient of the Lewis Hine Award for dedicated service to children in need.

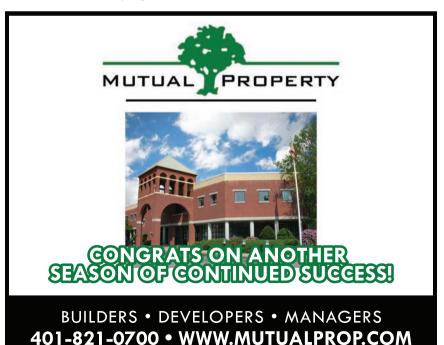
**Omar Laguerre-Lewis**, Assistant to the Director Omar was production assistant for *Bad Jews* this season. He has a B.F.A. in theater with a concentration in acting from the University of Rhode Island ('22). At URI, he appeared in *Twelfth Night, Miss Nelson is Missing!*, *A Brief History of the Earth and Everything in It*, and other productions. He was in Burbage Theatre Company's *Junk* and *The Squirrels*, and in Contemporary Theater Company's *The Neverending Story*. Omar is also a fellow in the Gamm Fellowship Program.

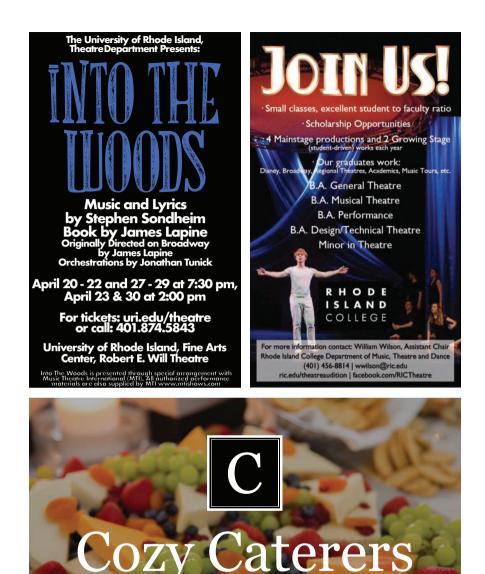
#### David Roy, Lighting Designer

David is a lighting designer based in New York City. His previous Gamm designs include Bad Jews, Ironbound, Assassins, Escaped Alone & Come and Go, King Elizabeth, The Nether, American Buffalo, A Skull in Connemara, The Rant, The House of Blue Leaves, The Big Meal, Macbeth, The Real Thing, Red, and Paul, as well as video and sound for 1984. His New York designs have been seen at The New School, Cherry Lane, Incubator Arts, Ohio, Bushwick Starr, Wild Project, Clemente Soto Velez, and others. Regional: Barker Room Rep, Van Cougar, WAM Theater, Central Square Theater, Company ONE, Brevard Music Center, and Ford's Theatre. David is head of design with IMCD Lighting and a member of United Scenic Artists.

#### Eddy Tavares, Production Assistant

Ednilson "Eddy" Tavares served as assistant director for this season's *Faith Healer* at The Gamm. He graduated from the Community College of Rhode Island ('22) with an A.F.A. in general studies and a concentration in theater. At CCRI, he appeared in *Detroit '67, I And You, Water by the Spoonful, Three Years From Thirty,* and *Othello,* as well as other area productions. Eddy played competitive soccer for nine years. His introduction to theater happened during high school as a Gamm Summer Intensive (GSI) camper. Eddy is a fellow in this season's Gamm Fellowship Program.





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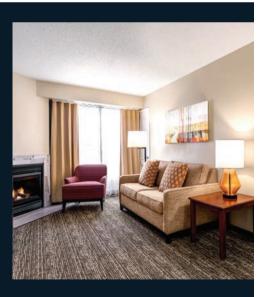
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Jessica Castigli	ego, Lila Hawryluk,
Magenta Kowakowski, Erin Sh	ort, Jennifer Wilson

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#### DEVELOPMENT

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Director of Leadership & Institutional Giving	Davis

#### EDUCATION

#### **FELLOWS**

Autumn Jefferson, Omar Laguerre-Lewis, Eddy Tavares

#### **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

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Audience Development	
& Advertising Sales AssociateL	auryn E. Sasso

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Director of Production	Jessica Hill Kidd
Associate Artistic Director	. Rachel Walshe
Technical Director.	Max Ramirez

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## GAMM LEADERSHIP



#### Tony Estrella, Artistic Director

Season 38 marks Tony's 20th anniversary as artistic director at The Gamm. Since his first show with the company (*Antony & Cleopatra*), he has appeared in or directed more than 70 productions. His favorite roles include Frank in Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shannon in *The Night of the Iguana*, Hamlet in *Hamlet*, Moe Axelrod in *Awake and Sing!*, Valere in *La Bete*, Katurian in *The Pillowman*, Teach in *American Buffalo*, and Vanya in *Uncle Vanya*. Directorial highlights include *Bad Jews*, *Describe the Night*, *Assassins*, *JQA*, *True West*, *Festen*, Sara Kane's 4:48

Psychosis, A Streetcar Named Desire, Red, and the U.S. premieres of Howard Brenton's Paul and Sarah Waters' The Night Watch. Tony has written several works for The Gamm stage including A Lie Agreed Upon (2021), and adaptations of Dylan Thomas' A Child's Christmas in Wales, Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler, and Barry Unsworth's acclaimed novel Morality Play. His film credits include appearances in Martin Scorsese's The Departed, Kenneth Lonergan's Manchester by the Sea, Greta Gerwig's Little Women, and The Good House. He is a recipient of the Claiborne Pell Award for Excellence in the Arts and is a longtime member of the theater faculty at his alma mater, University of Rhode Island.



#### Amy Gravell, Managing Director

Amy is a mission-driven leader with 25 years' experience in Rhode Island's nonprofit sector, specifically in fundraising and marketing, as well as staff and program development. She previously served as the associate executive director for the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket, where she led the youth development organization in a historic capital and endowment campaign to renovate and expand the facility. Additional positions have included marketing and development director for Tockwotton Home senior living community, and director of admissions for The Prout School, a

college preparatory high school. Amy serves as immediate past-president of the board of directors for the Association of Fundraising Professionals – RI Chapter (AFP-RI), and is a Clifton Strengths coach for Leadership Rhode Island. Formerly a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America Professional Association, she was named 2015 Northeast Professional of the Year. Past professional affiliations include Shri Service Corps, providing free yoga outreach programs to cultivate compassionate, balanced, and inclusive communities, and the City of Pawtucket's Advisory Commission on Arts and Culture. Amy has a B.A. in sociology from Wheaton College in Norton, Mass., with a concentration in women and family studies. She is a graduate of Leadership Rhode Island and Boys & Girls Clubs of America's Advanced Leadership Program.

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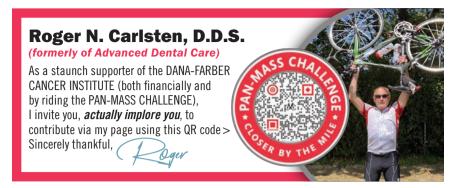
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