

These 6 RI businesses have created a recovery-friendly workplace. How they did it.



Katie Mulvaney

Providence Journal

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The Journal profiled a half dozen businesses and organizations certified as recovery-friendly workplaces in Rhode Island. Here are snapshots exploring how they are supporting their staff.

Feast & Fettle

When Maggie Mulvena Pearson and her best friend, Nikki Oliveira Nix, founded the gourmet meal delivery company Feast & Fettle in 2016, they had only 27 clients in Providence and East Bay communities. Since then, their customer base has swelled to 10,000. They employ 250 people, with a fleet of 60-plus vans delivering fresh meals across seven states.

The East Providence-based business signed on to the Rhode Island Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative about a year ago in keeping with its credo of trying to support workers holistically. They provide employees with a monthly stipend for wellness, such as a gym membership or a massage, and send them home with \$150 of prepared food each week. They brought a social worker on staff.



“Our mission is to nourish everyday life,” said Kyla Hanaway-Quinlan, chief operating officer and head of people at Feast & Fettle.

Aspirational signs lined the walls on a recent morning as the company buzzed with activity and a huge vat of marinara simmered. “Be Generous.” “Try Fail Try Succeed.”

“Overall our philosophy has always been very open-minded with hiring practices,” Hanaway-Quinlan said.

Hanaway-Quinlan has experienced substance use issues personally within her family and the rough-and-tumble restaurant industry known for its long hours and demanding pace.

They now incorporate substance-free events for employees to enjoy. They’ve trained staff on the use of naloxone. The social worker, Fernanda Poyant, is poised to connect employees with resources when and if they are ready, and to

keep an eye out if someone is in need. They are considering establishing a recovery group in-house.

“Our employees really understand they are part of a community,” said Hanaway-Quinlan, who sits on the board of OpenDoors, an organization dedicated to serving people who have spent time in prison.

The company focuses on how best to keep its workers, and, as a result, it maintains a high retention rate, she said.

“For us, at the end of the day this is about if someone is suffering from substance use, they won’t be able to bring their best to work,” Hanaway-Quinlan said.

Kristi’s Kraftails

Kristi Dukoff, owner and founder of Warren-based Kristi’s Kraftails, is proud of the company's certification as a recovery-friendly workplace.

“I think it creates a welcoming environment,” said Dukoff, who founded her enterprise in 2022 and signed on shortly after. “I just want people not to be left out.”



Kristi's Kraftails offers locally sourced, seasonally inspired craft mocktails that are naturally low in sugar and made with fresh fruit. They are now in 20 wholesale locations, she said.

Dukoff said she was inspired to produce alcohol-free beverages for pregnant women and people looking to achieve a healthier lifestyle.

Kristi's Kraftails, which Dukoff currently runs alone with some help from her mother, can be found at farmers markets and festivals. Maui The Mocktail Kart can also be booked for parties or special occasions. The artisan-crafted mocktails must be pre-ordered.

Providence Business News

Providence Business News is one of two media organizations in the state certified as a recovery-friendly workplace.

The news industry is known for its grueling tempo and deadline pressure, and the outlet became certified in August because “we agree with the purpose of the program,” publisher Annemarie Brisson said in an email.

“Employers play a critical role in elevating the importance of substance use and mental health conditions in the workplace and [The Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative] is dedicated to equipping them to address it,” Brisson said.

Providence Business News has 19 people on staff and focuses on cultivating a collegial environment, she said.

“At PBN we work to build a culture that supports our employees, and this initiative was one step in creating an atmosphere of openness around discussing substance use, mental health, the stress of caregiving, and trauma with employees. So, when leadership says this is a compassionate, caring workplace, the employees believe it,” Brisson said.

“Having access to RFW acting as a referral source if an employee needs treatment of any kind is a great benefit for all employees to be aware of,” she continued.

Providence Business News employees participated in the recovery-friendly workplace training offered by the state, and “it was well received,” she said.

Building Futures

Building Futures, a nonprofit agency that works with the construction industry and other industries and offers an apprenticeship program, was the first entity to apply to be certified as a recovery-friendly workplace, according to Andrew L. Cortés, president and CEO.

“We wear that as a badge of honor,” Cortés said in an interview.



The opioid epidemic hit construction workers and people who work in similar occupations hard. Suicide is also a leading killer of those men and women who build houses, offices, bridges and roads.

With that in mind, Building Futures is dedicated to building an environment equipped with peer support from people in long-term recovery and supervisors trained to keep a watch out for workers who are struggling. Earlier this year, they launched the "We've Got Your Back" campaign aimed at combating overdose deaths and high suicide rates.

“Alarmingly, one in five deaths in Rhode Island is in the construction industry,” Cortés said.

“We’ve lost graduates,” Cortés said. “Conversations we weren’t having 20 years ago, we’re having now.”

Building Futures has two licensed clinicians on staff who are ready to help workers access treatment when needed.

“It’s working,” Cortés said. “We’re seeing more and more folks reach out to us.”

Cortés acknowledges that part of being a recovery-friendly employer is changing behaviors that have historically been steeped with intolerance toward people’s struggles.

“If someone was not fully present, that person would have been laid off,” he said. “That’s a huge change in the construction industry.”

That also means offering social events without alcohol for the 25-person staff and the wider industry, Cortés said.

“It’s really about changing,” he said. “It’s about talking about things that haven’t been talked about in the past.”

Warwick Public Library

Warwick Public Library maintains a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, according to director Aaron Coutu. It became certified as a recovery-friendly workplace in 2021, a year before Coutu took the helm.

“It fits with one of the things we’re trying to do here,” Coutu said in a recent interview. “We hope we are creating an open environment.”

The initiative raises awareness about what resources are available if they or a family member are in crisis.



“It allows us to be proactive,” he said. “Folks who are in those situations are facing a hard time. Ultimately, we want them to be able to ask for help.”

Coutu recognizes that many people spend more time with their colleagues than with their loved ones, so it's important to cultivate a family environment among the 53 library employees.

“We care about our staff, but also, the more your staff is happy, the more they’re capable of doing their job well,” Coutu said.

The initiative also forces employers and others to avoid and examine discriminatory thinking when it comes to hiring, he said.

“The biggest thing is for them to know we’re open-minded. Everyone has issues,” he said. “You don’t want to be the organization that turned someone away.”

City of East Providence

In 2021, the City of East Providence became one of the first municipalities to be certified as a recovery-friendly workplace. Mayor Roberto DaSilva announced the city's participation in a letter to its 450 employees.

The goal, he said, was “ to create positive work environments, where all recognize the importance of reducing barriers for those impacted by substance use disorder.”

He noted that 64 East Providence residents lost their lives due to drug overdoses between 2014 and 2019 and that the pandemic had exacerbated those rates nationwide.

“Through the Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative, our employees, family members and East Providence community members who are in recovery or have a substance use disorder will have the support they need in their journey back to health,” DaSilva wrote.

By joining the initiative, the city was declaring its support for employees in recovery “so that they can be successful at providing essential City services for our residents and live stigma-free, healthy and fulfilled lives.”



“Our goal is to promote prevention and recovery in a confidential, judgment-free workplace environment,” he added.

“To me, it looks like we allow as many resources and accommodations as possible,” the city’s Human Resources director, Robert Perry, said.

Perry hopes that participation will give employees the courage to seek help and have open discussions if they encounter an issue.

“It’s giving people the opportunity not to be stigmatized,” Perry said.

The mayor, Perry said, has the leverage to make accommodations – such as necessary time off – on a case-by-case basis.

“I know firsthand in the past there have been employees who received accommodations,” he said. “They’re grateful.”

“Erring toward support and kindness is where we want to be. It does provide people in recovery another tool for a societal ill that was literally and figuratively manufactured,” Perry said. “It’s something I think is good for society.”