
CCRI's community roots

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Usually one imagines teachers standing in front of a classroom and students sitting at desks. On Tuesday, however, a group of 125 people, students, faculty and CCRI staff, did more than hit the books. They spent their day volunteering their services to nonprofit organizations. Terrie Celentano, assistant to the vice president of academic affairs, was one of several staffers to spend the day sorting and stacking cans of food at the Westbay Market, a food cupboard designed like a mini-supermarket and operated by Westbay Community Action in Warwick. Celentano felt the physical results of her exertions and quickly concluded, "I'll sleep tonight." Celentano's efforts and those of others is all part of the college's inauguration week activities that will culminate tomorrow afternoon at the Knight Campus with the installation of Ray Di Pasquale as the college's fourth president. Almost 43 years old, CCRI is New England's largest community college with more than 15,000 students. The college is a resource to many different people and that makes it a valuable asset to the region's economy. For many, such as those looking for a career in health care, it offers just what is needed. Its nursing program is rated among the best in the area. To many others, and in particular those who can't afford the cost of a four-year school, it is a great start. It offers the opportunity to learn new skills so they might find a new and better-paying job, or simply expand their knowledge and satisfy their curiosity. We find CCRI's decision to celebrate Di Pasquale's inauguration by offering its help to the community is especially appropriate. It reinforces Di Pasquale's emphasis on building partnerships and his recognition that "CCRI will play an instrumental role in local and regional workforce development." A trained workforce is critical to Rhode Island's ability to compete in a global economy. But it is more than what's good for today that we applaud President Di Pasquale's commitment to stand ready "to educate and train the workforce of our state and region." The roots of CCRI, as the name reflects, are in the community. It's an institution that has given a lot to the state's history and, with proper leadership, can provide even more opportunities for the people of Rhode Island. We wish President Di Pasquale every success and congratulate him on his recognition of CCRI's roots.