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## **Angel Taveras - Celebrate Providence's 375 with summer activities/events**

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Three hundred seventy five years ago, Roger Williams landed on the shores of the Seekonk River in Providence's Fox Point and established a colony along the shores of the Great Salt Cove.

Recently I joined with organizations from across the city at the Roger Williams National Memorial to kick off Providence's 375th anniversary celebration, a five-month-long series of events and activities marking Roger Williams founding of the city.

At a time when our city faces great challenges, this birthday celebration is a wonderful way to look back at our history and take pride in our city.

Ranger John McNiff acted as a Roger Williams interpreter at the June 1 kickoff, and began the event with a speech that invoked the legacy of the state's founding father.

Also providing entertainment at the event were Ray Watson of the First Light Powwow and the Affiliated Tribes of New England Indians, poet Christopher Johnson, and Michael Townsend of Tape Art, who created the Providence 375 logo in anticipation of the Providence 375 tape art mural which will be produced at the Bank of America City Center beginning June 13.

"The ideas of "liberty of conscience" and "soul freedom" that Williams put into practice on the site of the Memorial almost 400 years ago have never been more relevant than they are today," said Jan Reitsma, superintendent of the Roger Williams National Park and executive director of the John Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

The 375th anniversary celebration includes the participation of over 40 arts and tourism organizations and consists of over 200 individual events. The celebration is a partnership between the Providence Dept. of Art, Culture + Tourism, The Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Roger Williams National Park Services. The events take place now through October and culminate in a gala celebration in the fall.

Organizers have been working to include as many events as possible under the Providence 375 banner. Included are annual traditions like Waterfire, the city's summer concerts, and the Festival of Historic Houses. Many events have been created in honor of the celebration and include an essay series produced by the city archives, a literary speed-dating event at the Providence Community Libraries under the theme of "hope."

The R.I. Historical Society and the Providence Foundation have teamed up to offer four free walking tours that also reflect all four celebration themes. Roots Café is producing, "Rhythm and Rebellion," a multi-disciplinary series of events that celebrate the history of Rhode Island.

The Official Guide to Providence 375 includes a full schedule of events, fun facts and stories written by local experts. The guide can be picked up inside the Rhode Island Convention Center Rotunda. Additional copies will be distributed at events during the summer months.

Providence 375 is sponsored by Providence Monthly, CW28, The Rhode Island Foundation,

Providence En Espanol and Cutler & Company. The event is co-produced by the City of Providence, Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, The Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau, Roger Williams National Memorial Park in cooperation with RI Council for the Humanities.

For more information and schedule of events [www.providence375.com](http://www.providence375.com)

Angel Taveras is the mayor of Providence.

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