

RISE REPORTER

MARCH 2016 | VOL. 40, NO. 1



IN THIS ISSUE:

Rise begins a yearlong celebration of its 45 years of program services. Here, President Lynn Noren started as a college intern in 1979 working in Rise's (then) Work Activity program. Read more about our history as well as special events commemorating our anniversary on page 3,



RISE REPORTER

MARCH 2016 | VOL. 40, NO. 1

A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT LYNN NOREN

I LOVE THE START OF A NEW YEAR because it feels like there are so many exciting opportunities out there waiting to explore. With new strategic plans for 2016 in place, all of us at Rise have hit the ground running.

As always, one of our top priorities is to support the people we serve to live the life they choose. We are proud to be part of their teams and assist them with setting goals which are likely to change as their life experiences do.

At the core of most people's success is having an active support team, especially family members. The Woodruff family's story on page 4 highlights their son Ryan's drive to achieve his life dreams and the loving support they give him along the way. It is a testament to the power and importance of each person's support team, which is often anchored by family. Rise team members work collaboratively with them to orchestrate and provide customized services which help them "push boundaries and unlock possibilities."

To help ensure that future public policies support a broad range of choices for people, Rise's leadership and team members are actively involved in advocacy work with area social service agencies, funders, business partners, and the Minnesota State Legislature. In addition to our own efforts to help educate policymakers, we will be assisting individuals and their families get more involved in this important advocacy work with the help of our new governmental affairs intern from the University of Minnesota, Kyle Perisic.

One of Rise's core values has always been to embrace change and seek out innovation, striving to be on the cutting-edge of promising service practices and ahead of system changes. The great thing about innovation is that we don't yet know exactly what the answers will be, only that it will be an incredible journey along the way.



WHO WE ARE

Rise unlocks potential and opens doors to success for people with disabilities or other challenges through creative solutions and customized support. We envision a progressive, supportive, and collaborative environment that fosters meaningful growth and provides opportunities to live a life filled with purpose.

CONTENTS

- 03 Celebrating Rise's 45th anniversary in 2016
- 04 Parent Pam Woodruff has a conversation with
President Lynn Noren: "It's been quite a journey"
- 06 Anna is lovin' *The Bachelor*
- 07 Warsame is living the American Dream
- 08 Wanted: Gifts of time and talent
- 09 Grants enable Rise to expand services
- 10 Jody finds just the right fit
- 11 Art Speaks unleashes the inner artist

AT RISE

Tom Kettleon
Chair, Rise Board of Directors

Lynn Noren
President

Noel McCormick
Director of Advancement

Beth DePoint
Director of Public Relations; Editor

ON THE COVER

President Lynn Noren started at Rise as a college intern in 1979.





Honoring the past, celebrating our future

When Rise opened its doors on August 2, 1971, to serve four people with intellectual and related disabilities, no one could have predicted how the agency would grow!

IT PROMISES TO BE a year of celebration as Rise recognizes its 45th anniversary with several special events and projects scheduled throughout 2016.

We kicked off the year with our *45 Stories for 45 Years* series. Almost every week, we will tell you about one of the many great people associated with Rise since its incorporation in 1971.

Story #1 features Gladys and Chet Tollefson whose dreams for their son Loring, born with intellectual disabilities in 1955, fueled their determination to see to it that he and others had the opportunity to live productive lives.

Their hard work and determination, along with that of many Anoka County area “movers and shakers,” got Rise off to a good start. Continued support and collaboration have enabled Rise to expand well beyond people’s initial vision for the agency.

You will find these 45 stories posted throughout the year on our Facebook page (Rise, Incorporated), uploaded to our website (rise.org/our-story/45-stories/), as well as via electronic communications.

FESTIVE SPECIAL EVENTS

In addition to our annual *Tap-ping into Possibilities* “friend-raising” event (see page 9) and our 5th annual *Celebrate Rise Fundrais-*



Loring Tollefson’s parents, Chet and Gladys of Anoka, wanted their son to live a happy and productive life. They started Rise in 1971 to help ensure that he and others would know the satisfaction that comes from putting in an honest day’s labor at work they enjoyed.

ing Gala (see page 5), we are hosting our first-ever talent show open to all team members and people served by Rise. We hope you will join us on Tuesday, May 3, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Fridley School District Auditorium, 6000 West Moore Lake Drive. It should be an really fun and exciting evening.

Rise’s Art Speaks artists will have original work on display during the month of May at the Blaine City Hall, 10801 Town Square Drive. We hope you will attend a special reception for the artists which will be held Tuesday, May 17, from 4:30-6 p.m. (Read more about Art Speaks on page 11.)

Summer brings the annual *Celebrate Summer* picnic which will be held for Rise team members, people we serve, and their families on Sunday, August 7, from 3 to 6

p.m. at Aquatore Park in Blaine.

We hope you can join us for some or all of these special events in celebration of Rise’s 45 years.

LOVE FOR SON LIVES ON

Loring enjoyed his work at Rise for many years; he died in 2002. As Rise serves more than 3,000 people each year in employment, housing, and personal growth programs throughout the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota, it is clearly evident how Gladys and Chet’s love for their son lives on today.

“I really never dreamed Rise would take off like it did and become the agency it is today,” said Chet recently. “My Impossible Dream’ came true in so many ways I couldn’t have ever imagined! Hats off to everyone who has worked so hard over the years.”



'It's been quite a journey..'

Pam and John Woodruff are proud of the life their son Ryan has built for himself and are appreciative for Rise's customized employment services

AS ALL YOUNG PARENTS do, John and Pam Woodruff had hopes and dreams for their firstborn son, Ryan. But their original plans took a sharp turn when at nine months old, doctors diagnosed Ryan with cerebral palsy, a hearing disorder, and likely, an intellectual disability. They advised the Woodruffs to put Ryan in an institution.

"But at his young age, no one could really know what his potential would be," said Pam. "Instead, we took Ryan home and began educating ourselves. It's been quite a journey ever since -- he's had such a tremendously positive impact on the whole family!"

Through the years, the Woodruffs engaged the support of many professionals, including occupational, physical, and communication therapists, social workers, doctors, and special educators to

get Ryan the services he needed to live his life the way he wanted.

Pam recalls that it seemed that most of the reports from Ryan's early evaluations and exams had notations such as, "can't do..."; "won't work..."; "shouldn't..."

"Ryan would read the reports and say, 'But that's not me.' He never thought of his deafness as a disability and knew he could do whatever he put his mind to. Ryan became his own best advocate."

Ryan came to Rise in 2004 for employment services through the Day Training and Habilitation Sensory Support Unit. After working for several years with a work team at HOM Furniture in Coon Rapids assembling dining room chairs for the display floor and home deliveries, Ryan felt he was ready for a competitive job.

A special state-funded place-

ment program grant for people who are deaf enabled Rise to provide Ryan with customized job placement and support services.

“ Rise came in and saved the day. Working at HOM Furniture was a great stepping stone for Ryan and gave him the self-confidence he needed to take it to the next step. ”
~ Pam Woodruff

Today, at age 33, Ryan has far exceeded every dream his parents originally had for him. He has a great job with FedEx as a package sorter and was honored at the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala* last October as a *Rise'ing Star*. Ryan got married in June 2015, and he and his wife, Pa (who works for the State of Minnesota), live in a condo in West St. Paul. They attend the Deaf Life Church and are building a nice life together.

Pam said she was happy to be asked to serve on a statewide committee which annually reviews the grantees' progress to ensure the funding is being spent effectively.

"After all these years of benefiting from community resources, I am glad to have the opportunity to give back in this way," she added.

"Through Rise's person-cen-

Pam Woodruff and Rise President Lynn Noren discussed how critical family support is to a person's success as well as how important it is to work with an agency that has a wide range of options and resources to help individuals reach their goals.





tered approach to services, we direct our resources to provide what each person wants and needs to live the life they want.” said Rise President Lynn Noren. “Ryan’s family is an important part of the planning team. Their input is critical to his success.”

“Rise has the networks and the resources to help Ryan find his place in the world,” Pam added. “Rise helped launch him into the ‘real world’ with a job he loves and is proud of.

“Ryan has surprised and amazed us over and over and over. He has an internal drive and vision for himself that has far surpassed our expectations. We are so proud.”



Ryan was honored as a 2015 Rise’ing Star at the Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala held in October 2015. He celebrated the evening with his parents, Pam and John, brother Connor, and wife Pa.



Gala Co-Chairs Jenny Poyorena and Angie Franzen invite you to save the date for the 5th annual

Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala

Thursday, October 6, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest

Tickets go on sale August 1.

If you would like information about event sponsorship opportunities, please contact Noel McCormick at Rise: 763-783-2832; nmccormick@rise.org

Anna is lovin' The Bachelor!

IF THERE WAS A ROSE to be given to the biggest-fan-ever of the ABC TV hit show, *The Bachelor*, it would likely go to Anna Robinson.

Oh, wait – she's already received one for that!

For the past 15 of the show's 20 seasons, Anna has been tuning in Monday nights to catch the popular love drama. She also follows the cast and stars on Facebook and Twitter (hashtag #bachelor-nation), connecting with them and other fans around the world.

"I love the glamour of it all," said Anna, who is 25. "A handsome guy gets to date as many as 30 beautiful women and the competition makes for good TV. Many of us chat during the show, trying to decide who's going to win."

When cast members and former contestants came to the Twin Cities in August 2012 for a charity event, Anna was there to greet them. Some of them even came back to her house for a personal visit.

"It was so unreal," Anna remembered. "I just couldn't believe how much they really do care about their fans."

Never one to dream small, Anna tweeted the creator of the show last March and boldly asked him for tickets to the "af-

ter the final rose" show which broadcasts from Los Angeles. His assistant contacted Anna to chat further about her request and then offered to fly Anna and her parents out to L.A. A limousine met them at the airport to whisk them away to a hotel.

"When we got to the hotel, the manager and others did a rose ceremony for me right in the lobby," Anna remembered. "I got two dozen roses from them all!"

Not only did Anna and her parents have some of the best seats in the audience for the show, but she got to go back stage to meet host Chris Harrison. Anna then got "all dolled-up" by a make-up artist.

She met up with Chris again



Anna backstage with Host Chris Harrison at the "after the final rose" show of *The Bachelor* in 2015.

when he came in May 2015 to the Mall of America for a book-signing event of his novel, *The Perfect Letter*.

"He called me out from the stage and called me 'his girl.' I never thought I'd be a part of something like this! It's so fun to have made these friends and connect with people who enjoy *The Bachelor* as much as I do. It's amazing what social media and TV shows can do to bring friendships together."

Although Rise staff often teasingly ask her when she's going to leave for Hollywood to try out for *The Bachelor*, for now, Anna is happy to put her computer skills to good use as a data entry clerk at Rise's Data Ability program in Crystal where she has worked for nearly four years. She also serves as the office receptionist several hours a week. Anna says she enjoys the variety of interesting work she does.



Living the American Dream

IN HIS NATIVE COUNTRY of Somalia, Warsame Warsaali was a hard-working owner of a passenger transportation company. He also grew “the best bananas in the world,” exporting them to Europe.

When civil war erupted in 2003, Warsame’s wife and five children, who are now ages 16 to 27, immigrated to the U.S. But Warsame moved from one refugee camp to another in several different African countries before finally reuniting with his family in the Twin Cities in 2012.

“My dream always was to work in the United States and make the most of all the opportunities available here,” said Warsame. “I did not want to just sit at home taking benefits from the government, I wanted to go to work and have a good job. If a person wants to get somewhere, he does whatever it takes to improve.”

Although Warsame worked a number of temp jobs in the Twin Cities through an agency, it wasn’t enough to support his family so they were forced to go on public assistance.

Because he was receiving MFIP (Minnesota Families Investment Program) benefits through Hennepin County, Warsame was referred to Rise for career plan-

ning and job placement services.

Hillary Thomas, a Rise MFIP placement specialist, said Warsame was incredibly persistent and determined to provide for his family without government support. He came to Rise’s Pathways office every morning to conduct his job search on the computers.

At a Pathways job fair, he was hired by Global Delta Services to be a ramp agent at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. It was a good job, but Warsame

“ My dream always was to work in the United States and make the most of all the opportunities available here. ”

needed more hours to support his family so he began looking for another part-time job.

He continued to use the computers and resources available at

Pathways for his job search. Last fall, Warsame found a job opening online with the new Amazon Fulfillment Center in Shakopee. He applied and was hired at \$13 an hour, which enabled him to leave his job with Global Delta Services. He was also proud to be able to end his public assistance and support his family on his wages.

Warsame said that so far, living in the U.S. has surpassed his original expectations of opportunities and he is most grateful.

“This is the American Dream,” he said. “I love working at Amazon and I love this country. I used to believe that America was a land of equal opportunity – but I see now it’s even much more than that!”

Warsame’s long-range plan is to start his own transportation business like he had in Somalia. He supports his Somali friends and family however he can as they make new lives in the United States.



Warsame had the opportunity to tell his story to Rep. Keith Ellison (D) from Minnesota’s 5th District who visited with Rise team members, job-seekers, and local employers at Rise’s Pathways office in South Minneapolis on February 18. Ellison was interested to learn more about how Rise is working collaboratively with employers and other agencies to assist people who are receiving welfare to find a good job and become self-sufficient. Ellison was he was impressed with Warsame’s work ethic.

Wanted: Gifts of time & talent by Zoe Leonard-Monrad

AS A FELLOW WITH New Sector, an AmeriCorps program focused on nonprofit professional development, I am working for eleven months to develop a volunteer program at Rise. This will help team members effectively tap into the talents and time of community members who wish to help enhance programming and support Rise.

After researching “best practices” and discussing with Rise team members how they could most benefit from community volunteers, we are excited by the different types of volunteer projects we already have underway.

For instance, two of our business partners have offered their knowledge and expertise to support Rise and the people we serve. Over the next few months, Rahul Sakhamuri, a continuous improvement leader with Cummins Power Generation’s Internal Logistics team, is volunteering his and the rest of his team’s engineering expertise to help redesign some of the many production fixtures Rise workers use.

In addition, Mark Bergmann, a Rise Board member, and his Target IT team met with Data Ability clerks at both the Spring Lake Park and Crystal locations to share information on careers in technology and effective computer processes. Rise’s data entry clerks demonstrated to the Target team how they use their adaptive computer



Rahul Sakhamuri with Rise’s Maintenance Supervisor Lee Felton.

hardware and software to do their work for Rise and subcontract customers.

We are also revamping Rise’s internship program and are excited to have a new government affairs intern. Kyle Perisic, a political science student at the University of Minnesota, will assist people in engaging and communicating with policymakers and legislators so the needs of people with disabilities are prioritized in legislation.

In addition, a development and special events intern will assist Rise team members prepare for the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala* and the *Tapping Into Possibilities* “friend-raising” events, plus other

special festivities we are planning for Rise’s 45th anniversary year.

This is just the beginning of interesting and exciting opportunities to engage people from the community in a wide range of important projects to support Rise’s people and programs.

What are you interested in? Would you like to conduct mock job interview and edit resumes for job-seekers? Accompany people on community outings? Assist people in music or art therapies?

If you have ideas on how you -- or a group of friends or co-workers -- would like to volunteer at Rise, I would love to hear from you! Email me at zleonard-monrad@rise.org; or call 763-792-2454.



Grants enable Rise to expand services

Here is a brief recap of some recent major funding opportunities

MINNESOTA'S DEPARTMENT of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) recently awarded Rise a grant for \$160,436 to expand Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services in Hennepin County. This IPS project provides employment services to people with mental illness in collaboration with the Hennepin County Mental Health Center. Rise was one of only three organizations selected out of eighteen applicants to provide expanded services. An additional 100 people will receive services annually.

The Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS) awarded Rise another two-year

grant. Rise offers job placement and follow-up services to young adults who have fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. We were also able to add additional support services for individuals and their families to assist them in navigating the often complex systems of government benefits and options.

Rise was honored to receive another year of Person-Centered Thinking (PCT) training and technical support from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This special project allows Rise to provide extensive training to direct service professionals in PCT practices to continue to improve

the quality of our services. You can read more about Rise's Person-Centered Thinking project in the December 2015 issue of the *Rise Reporter*.

A major expansion of the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) program is underway. In 2015, MEC was awarded a \$475,000 annual grant to expand services to outstate Minnesota. Co-managed by Rise and Lifetrack, MEC is a program focused on career planning, job placement, and retention support services for adults who are deaf, deafblind or hard-of-hearing. MEC will open offices in Duluth, Virginia, Moorhead, Mankato, St. Cloud, and Faribault/Rochester.



\$15 Cover

- * \$5 Beers * Appetizers
- * Great Raffle Prizes
- * Live Music by Battlelegs

Gather your friends and join us

Monday, July 18 * 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.

for Rise's 2nd Annual 'Friend-Raiser'

Tapping Into Possibilities

at the Bauhaus Brew Labs

1315 Tyler Street in Northeast Minneapolis

Finding just the right fit

“ONE OF THE THINGS I like best about working at Goodwill is that here, it’s all about recycling and reusing. With my background in conservation, that was really important to me,” said Jody Peterson.

After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in natural resources and soil conservation from the University of Minnesota Crookston, Jody worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Soil Conservation Services doing survey work as well as technical drawings.

She moved on to work in a garden center and then for the U.S. Postal Service as a mail carrier for 14 years. Jody enjoyed all three of these diverse careers very much.

But in November 2003, Jody suffered an aneurysm which left her with significant physical disabilities. Following her initial hospitalization, Jody lived at Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute’s residential facility in Golden Valley and a rehabilitation facility for

more than a year to learn new ways of doing daily tasks.

“It was a really big adjustment,” Jody remembered. “As I got stronger, I realized that what I really wanted to do was to get back to work again,” said Jody.

She enrolled in Rise’s Connections program in 2005 for people with brain injuries and other physical disabilities and worked for about ten years on a wide range of production subcontracts. Last summer, she felt ready for a change.

Placement Specialist Mary Steinmetz assisted Jody with her new career plan and job search. When she learned of an opening at the Goodwill store in Maple Grove, Jody thought it would suit her well. She works three days a week doing a variety of tasks on the sales floor, including putting newly donated items out, assisting customers, straightening merchandise, and doing price checks for the cashiers.



Jody enjoys her work at the Goodwill store in Maple Grove.

“I like having so many things to do and there’s always something new to learn; the time goes by really fast,” Jody said. “I’m blessed to have really good co-workers that I can connect with.” Mary checks in with Jody on a regular basis to ensure things continue to go well.

In her free time, Jody enjoys volunteering with the City of Plymouth’s Parks and Recreation Department on gardening and planting projects and as a greeter for children’s programs.



Occupational Communication Specialist Mary Jo Duncan (right) works with Rise’s Minnesota Employment Center for People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

CHECK OUT EXCITING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT RISE!

Rise is seeking creative, compassionate people to join our team. We offer a fun, fast-paced work environment, excellent training opportunities, and the chance to make a difference in people’s lives. Learn more about available positions and apply today!

For current job openings, visit Rise’s website at rise.org/jobs

Unleashing the inner artist

BRIAN HOFFMAN HAD a vision for his painting of the Statue of Liberty and appreciated the professional tips on acrylic techniques he received from Art Therapist Stacy Gross. He plans to hang the painting on his living room wall.

“I like to paint because it’s relaxing for me,” said Brian. “My first painting of a lighthouse was so good, my mom made notecards of it!” She then sold them and donated the proceeds to Rise’s Art Speaks program.

“All of a sudden I was an artist and I was proud -- it felt good.”

Stacy works with people in Rise’s Day Training and Habilitation and Adult Day Programs. Art Speaks complements other therapeutic and habilitative services people receive. Stacy guides them and encourages them to speak out through different art media.

Nathanial James’s art has been shown in venues around the Twin Cities. “Art has made me feel free from my wheelchair -- the art helps me to forget my problems.”



Art Therapist Stacy Gross assists Brian Hoffman with his painting of the Statue of Liberty.

“Creating art provides opportunities for self-expression,” said Stacy. “Through art groups and exhibitions, our artists experience the chance to find their voice and share it with others. Creating art also fosters self-esteem, promotes self-regulation and relaxation, reduces anxiety, increases independence, and develops problem-solving and decision-making skills.”

In October 2015, 500 guests at *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala*

took home a hand-painted tile coaster, specially created by an Art Speaks artist just for the occasion. At this year’s gala, guests will also receive a great Art Speaks product.

Artists have the opportunity to display their artwork in public, private, and corporate sites throughout the Twin Cities area.

CUMMINS’ SUPPORT

Cummins Power Generation has been an avid supporter of Rise’s Art Speaks program for many years. Its corporate office buildings in Fridley and Shorewood rotate artwork on a regular basis and host an annual art sale.

Cummins’s associates in the United Kingdom were so impressed with the program that the Community Involvement Team in Kent now works with the Royal School for Deaf and Hartsdown School to give young artists an opportunity to display and sell their artwork.



Administrative Offices | 8406 Sunset Road NE | Spring Lake Park, MN 55432-1387

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Permit No. 94279
TWIN CITIES, MN

Celebrating 45 years of 'Unlocking Possibilities' with scenes from the past: **1.** Chet Tollefson, who founded Rise in 1971, turns a truck garage into Rise's first office and production facility with help from volunteers. This original building is still Rise's administrative headquarters. **2.** Subcontract production work. **3.** An early Board of Directors meeting. **4.** Kathleen Schuldt was one of the first four employees. **5.** The Rise Auxiliary supported people in many ways, including hosting holiday parties.



www.rise.org | Facebook: Rise, Incorporated | Shop: RiseStore.2020Brands.com

Send mailing changes to: Ian Plitnick • 763.792.2448 • iplitnick@rise.org