

RISE REPORTER



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Celebrate Rise on Oct. 8

Shannon Meehan is
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612Brew was great fun!

Michael Sack, a Rise data entry clerk, is also co-author of a baseball blog,
Two Men On. Read more about Michael on page 5.

Wendy finds that Rise's ARMHS helps her keep healthy and move forward with recovery goals

Having struggled with major depression since childhood, Wendy Rea has been in and out of treatment programs and services for many years. She has limited connections with many family members and gone through traumatic events. The colorful butterfly prominently tattooed on her right wrist signifies the change and recovery she continues to make daily.

"I believe that those really hard times helped make me a more compassionate, patient person," said Wendy. "I have new tools in my box to help myself and others."

Wendy first started working with staff from Rise in the mid-1990s when she worked as a co-coordinator for the Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Network (CSN).

Wendy often shared her story with others who have mental health issues as well as the general public and service providers. She also served on local committees and state councils in an effort to help expand the public's awareness and community resources.

"Those experiences really increased my self-confidence and gave me so many great opportunities to work on issues I believed in and was passionate about," said Wendy.

She moved to Phoenix with her son for two years to start her own business offering peer support services, but when things didn't work out, Wendy returned to St. Cloud.

"I was depressed and felt like I had accomplished nothing in Phoenix," Wendy explained. "I needed to start over completely – new therapist, new county social worker, and new psychiatrist. About a year after I returned, I started attending mental health day treatment three days a week and set new goals to help me figure out what I wanted to do with my life."

In September 2014, Wendy returned to Rise's Central Minnesota Works office in St. Cloud and met with Lea Engnell, a housing support specialist and ARMHS (Adult Rehabilitation Mental Health Services) practitioner. Together, they wrote a new WRAP, or Wellness Recovery Action Plan, to help guide Wendy through challenging times.

Lea assisted Wendy with accessing a number of community services for transportation and food, as well as fitness and recreational activities. Wendy also achieved her goal to eliminate her personal debt, and by making sacrifices, live within a budget.

Wendy realized she needed more structure in her days and looked for something that would give her a feeling of meaning and purpose.

Currently, she volunteers 15 hours a week as a foster grandparent working with girls 12 to 18 years old who reside at the St. Cloud Children's Home operated by Catholic Charities.

"I enjoy kids this age and can really identify with them having had a tough childhood myself," said Wendy. "I do arts and crafts with

them as well as fitness and recreational activities like canoeing on the Mississippi River, baking, rock climbing and other fun things. We're slowly getting to know each other. I think I could facilitate some of them to write WRAPs which would be really beneficial."

"Lea has been so great in helping me figure out just what works for me and then track my progress," said Wendy who added that she and Lea reassess her ARMHS goals every six months and update her plan. "I am committed to maintaining my recovery plan and following through to stay well."

"Wendy is very resourceful and does well with advocating for herself and her needs," said Lea. "She has good insight into what helps to keep her healthy, and maybe more importantly, a good plan for when things aren't going so well."

"Now even my small victories are very gratifying," she added. "I never thought I'd be able to handle all this, but now I know when and how to ask for help and can advocate for myself. I felt disconnected and isolated from others for far too long. Lea gives me the ongoing support I need so that I won't quit, even if things get hard."

Wendy rents a basement apartment from her daughter. Her son, mother and sister all live close by and she enjoys spending time with them. With a degree in American Studies that she earned with honors in 1996 at the age of 42, Wendy is keeping her eyes open to employment opportunities.



Because everyone deserves to
live a life filled with purpose.

Fourth Annual
Celebrate Rise
Fundraising Gala

Thursday, October 8, 2015
5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest
7025 Northland Drive North
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

with
Jason DeRusha, WCCO-TV
as emcee



Registration closes
September 24, 2015

Register online at Event Brite:
celebraterise2015.eventbrite.com

If you have questions about the event or wish to inquire
about event sponsorship, contact Noel McCormick at Rise:
phone: 763-783-2832 | email: nmccormick@rise.org

PUSHING BOUNDARIES. UNLOCKING POSSIBILITIES.

Shannon works her 'dream job' at the YMCA helping young children learn and develop

The bright summer sunshine just seemed to give the kids participating in the YMCA's Summer Power program in Shoreview some extra positive energy – and Shannon Meehan was enjoying leading them in various morning activities at the Turtle Lake Elementary School location.

Shannon is excited to be working at her “dream job” as a YMCA program staff member working with young children enrolled in this YMCA program.

Shannon was originally hired in December 2014 with the YMCA's School Age Care, an after-school program at Valentine Hills Elementary School in Arden Hills. Shannon is spending the summer months working 20 hours a week with kindergarten through fourth-grade kids. She engages them in play, arts and crafts, reading, and outdoor activities.

“At the end of the school year, the Y asked us all to tell them five places we'd like to work for the summer and then matched us up where they needed us the most,” Shannon explained.

“I really love working with the Summer Power program with a small group of kids. Then in September, I will move to another YMCA after-school program.”

Shannon came to Rise's Community Integration Program (CIP)-Coon Rapids in February of 2012, and after working in clerical and production jobs, decided she wanted to pursue a career in child care. Customized Job Developer Sarah Kohl-Leaf assisted Shannon



Reading to the kids enrolled in the YMCA's Summer Power program is one of Shannon's many activities she enjoys doing with them.

in her career planning and job search. Sarah also follows up with Shannon as needed to ensure all continues to go well on the job.

A few years ago, Shannon volunteered at a day care center and says, “That cemented my wanting a career working with kids! I love being able to help them develop and learn. I think they really respond to me.”

“Shannon never gave up on her goal to work with children,” said Sarah. “She had many interviews that did not develop into employment, but Shannon kept her chin up and kept moving toward her goal.”

“Her employment at the YMCA has given Shannon a chance to flourish in a career for which she has a real passion. Shannon is learning, growing and increasing her independence through her job at the YMCA. I am so proud of her!”

In addition to a weeklong YMCA training session for the special

summer program, Shannon says she has learned a lot this summer from her supervisor, Site Director Bryant Richards. “He has taught me some really good ways to keep everything positive and how to have the kids listen to me. He lets me know when I'm doing a good job and it makes me feel good when he gives me a ‘thumbs up.’”

“Shannon is a hard worker who strives to improve everyday and actively wants feedback on how she is doing,” said Bryant. “She has a great amount of pride in what she does.”

Doing so well on the job has helped boost Shannon's self-esteem and confidence in other areas of her life, too, she said. “I want to have a long-time career working with kids with the YMCA.”

A 2004 graduate of Irondale High School, Shannon enjoys scrapbooking, caring for her cat, and babysitting her two-year-old nephew; she is most excited to have a niece on the way.

Michael Sack co-authors *Two Men On* blog to chat about his passion for baseball and accessibility to public venues

Minnesota Twins fans are really enjoying this season as the team sets its sights on the playoff games at the end of summer. Among their most avid fans are Michael Sack, a data entry clerk with Rise's Creative Partnerships South program in Bloomington, and his buddy, Sam Graves. Together they have co-authored *Two Men On*, a blog dedicated to sports and accessibility topics, since January 2010.

The two young men met in high school and their friendship formed around their mutual love of sports, especially Twins baseball. Michael and Sam have split a Twins season ticket package for the past six seasons and love attending home games at Target Field. He's shown here at a game he attended with his dad in August.

Michael said he was thrilled to throw out the first pitch at a Twins' home game last September. His favorite team to cheer on, other than the Twins, is the Chicago Cubs.

Michael and Sam's blog commentaries address a wide range of baseball-related topics such as Major League Baseball trades and hires, changes to rules, and ballparks.

After reading their blog, Twins President Dave St. Peter invited Sam and Michael to tour Target Field. They came with a three-page list of things to check out for

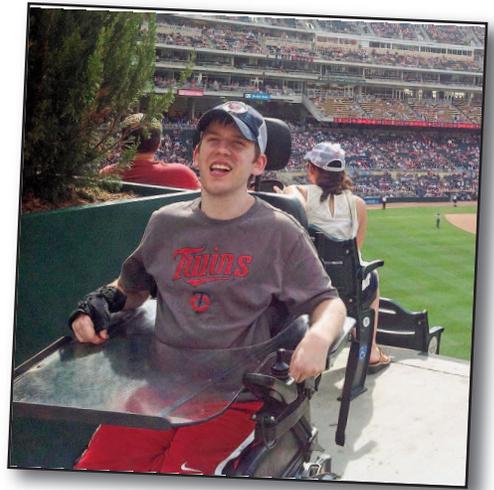
accessibility, including doors, restrooms, elevators, seating, concession stands, and kiosks. Their input was important to help ensure that everyone who comes to an event at Target Field has a great time.

Their blog discussions have also addressed accessibility plans for other Twin Cities sports venues, including the new St. Paul Saints ballpark in St. Paul and the new Vikings stadium in Minneapolis.

Michael started with Rise's Creative Partnership South program in 2011 after graduating from Transition Plus and South High School in Minneapolis. His computer skills and strong work ethic were immediately apparent to Rise staff and Michael quickly became



Michael is a data entry clerk at Creative Partnerships South in Bloomington. He is known for his striving for perfection.



one of their best data entry clerks.

"His attention to detail, focus, and strive for perfection is what makes Michael so good," said DTH Director Melinda Dannley. "He has even helped staff develop quarterly reporting templates that have made their jobs so much easier; we all appreciate the good work he does."

Michael has also been featured on MPR radio's *All Things Considered* program in 2010 and was part of Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare's *Cure Pity* campaign a year ago.

Michael has taken journalism classes at Minneapolis Community and Technical College and his blog is well-written and fun to read. You can find it at: gravessack.wordpress.com.

Or follow Michael and Sam on Facebook: www.facebook.com/twomenon. This summer, they hit more than 70,000 views!

In addition to being a baseball fanatic, Michael plays forward with his soccer team, the Minnesota Northern Lights, through the Midwest Power Soccer Association. The team travelled to Fort Wayne, Ind., in July to compete in a national tournament.

Shannon's exemplary food service skills and her ability to connect with seniors make her job as a culinary assistant at Park Health a perfect fit

I just love coming to work – I'm always excited to get here," said Shannon Nurmi about her job as a culinary assistant at Park Health & Rehabilitation Center in St. Louis Park. "I have always enjoyed being with seniors and felt a connection with them so I've wanted a job like this for a very long time."

Shannon worked at a Perkins restaurant in Stillwater for 14 years before moving to the Twin Cities and coming to Rise. Shannon has worked at a number of Rise production facilities and community work sites since 2003, but was ready to find a competitive job. After a long job search, she was about to give up when she interviewed and was hired at Park Health in July 2014.

Working from 3:45 p.m. until at least 8 p.m., Shannon helps prepare dinner trays based on people's individualized dietary tickets. It requires close attention to detail to ensure that each person gets just exactly what he or she requests.

Shannon checks the board for daily updates and instructions.



Leslie Erickson, director of Nutritional Services, is so impressed with Shannon's work ethic, skills, and the way she connects with the residents that she contacted Rise to see about hiring another individual.

"Shannon is meticulous in her work, extremely conscientious and responsible, and has a friendly smile for everyone," Leslie noted. "She cares about her co-workers and the residents. For instance, when she realized a resident was not responding to her as he normally would when they chatted, Shannon alerted the staff immediately. The gentleman had suffered a stroke and that Shannon got him quick attention made all the difference."

"I have volunteered at Maranatha Presbyterian Home for a long time visiting with the residents there,



Shannon prepares meal trays for evening dinner deliveries.

especially the ones who don't have family or friends who come," Shannon said. "My sister is a director of a nursing home in Stillwater and my mom worked at one for years so I guess it comes naturally to me."

Placement Specialist Rachel Tanning refers to Shannon as a "shining star," and says she is proud of how well she is doing. "Even when her mom died a few months ago, Shannon didn't let her personal grief prevent her from doing well on the job. I'm very proud of her."

Shannon takes Metro Mobility to work from her home in Brooklyn Center. In her free time, Shannon enjoys relaxing in Stillwater where her sister lives on five acres with her three dogs. She also visits her dad who lives in the nursing home where her sister works.

Lakeland Tool & Engineering an important partner since 1993

A quick scan of the production area Lakeland Tool & Engineering in Anoka shows people working on a wide range of interesting and challenging sub-assembly and hand packaging contracts, from assembling cash register drawers to putting together pulley kits for specialty beds.



Ray Timp assembles cash register drawers.

Rise has had a business partnership with Lakeland since 1993. Lakeland designs and produces thermoplastic and thermoset molds for customers worldwide.

Their production managers appreciate Rise's ability to provide a workforce that is flexible and can adjust quickly in numbers to meet Lakeland's specific production needs. People from Rise's TBI Connections, Internal Services, and Supported Employment Services-Anoka County programs currently work with Employment Specialist Tonya Kramer and Production Specialist Hailey Ray.

"We had an extremely busy spring and summer," said Tonya. "So we called in extra people from Rise's Community Integration Program in Coon Rapids and Internal Services in Spring Lake Park. Working together, we were able to meet all of Lakeland's production

deadlines and did awesome, high-quality work. I'm very proud of all these workers."

Over the past 22 years, workers from several Rise programs have honed their skills. Janelle Johnson said, "I just love working here because of the change of pace; I am never bored because there are so many different kinds of jobs to work on."

"Rise has always been great to work with," said Purchasing Manager Francis Kerkhove. "We appreciate how flexible they are with scheduling and work teams, what quality work everyone does, and their follow-through on projects. We know we can depend on them."

"Whenever they have a new contract in that they think a Rise crew could work on, we check it out," said Nancy Hoff, Rise's senior sales and marketing representative. "Their entire management team is so supportive and Rise is proud to partner with this great company."

Rimmer named MOHR's 'Job Coach of the Year'

Michelle Rimmer, an occupational communication specialist (OCS) with Rise's Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) for People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, was named MOHR's *Job Coach of the Year* for the Twin Cities metro area. MOHR is the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation.

"I have enjoyed working with MEC/Rise for so many years because of the diversity of the people and opportunities," said Michelle. "There are no two days the same and I am always kept on my toes."



"Over the past 16 years, Michelle has been instrumental in the development and continuing success of Rise's MEC program," said

Program Coordinator Blaine Newberg. "She has assisted hundreds of people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind find and maintain employment."

In addition to her exemplary service as a job coach, Michelle also handles staff interpreting duties, helps run Rise's OCS meetings, and mentors interns from the interpreter program at St. Paul College. OCS staff sign at an advanced level, understand hearing loss, deafness, accommodation and evaluation and also are trained as job coaches and job developers.

Rise hosted New Sector fellow to undertake yearlong partnership development project

Establishing a universal definition of 'partnership' will benefit all aspects of the agency

By Luke Kretchmar,
New Sector fellow

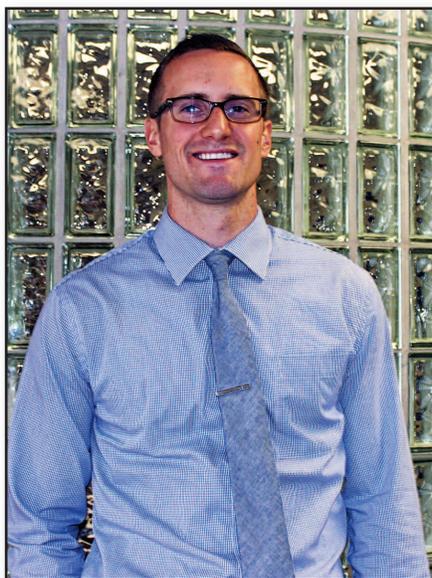
A nonprofit in its inaugural year in the Twin Cities, another with deep roots across the state, and a young professional focused on creating social impact -- these pieces came together to undertake a unique enterprise.

For eleven months, from September 2014 through July of this year, I led a project to support Rise's partnership development efforts. It was my first time working in human services and my first managing a project.

Throughout the past year, Rise program managers helped me envision what this project would do for Rise. And the trainings and mentorship I received from New Sector Alliance, the nonprofit new to the Twin Cities, equipped me with the knowledge to lead the project.

One of my first assignments was to organize a career training event with volunteers from Wells Fargo. While participants learned valuable skills and lessons from professionals, Wells Fargo employees from across the country who were in the Twin Cities for a conference were able to practice their leadership and volunteerism skills.

It quickly became clear how collaborating was mutually beneficial for both Rise and Wells Fargo. The



Luke also served in the Peace Corps prior to joining New Sector Alliance, a fellowship program offered only in Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, and the Twin Cities.

ing practices and compatible with partnerships of diverse kinds.

We expanded the scope of the project beyond Rise's Employment Services to the various partnerships staff throughout the agency they have with community businesses. We then established a universal definition of partnership plus a method for assessing key factors such as communication and involvement. In addition, we also wanted to quantify outcomes and link them to specific kinds of partnerships.

The culmination of my project was the design of tools and procedures to carry out this work. When integrated into their normal operations, the system will help Rise staff in all areas of the agency to further develop specific partnerships. Staff will be able to better assess the progress, status, and potential of each partnership, as well as partnerships as a whole.

I feel the project was a success and am thankful to Rise and New Sector Alliance for the opportunity they created for me. As much as I grew as a professional, I hope my work leads to even greater growth for Rise, its employees, and the amazing people they serve.

event further demonstrated to me that although two organizations may have different missions, they may very well have overlapping goals.

The idea stuck with me and helped shape the way I approached the project.

Staff from Rise's Employment Services program enlightened me on how they develop working partnerships with area business.

Yet, while Rise has many strong partnerships and staff who are skillful at building and maintaining them, there was no practice of formally assessing or designating partnerships.

We realized that it could be valuable to establish a system for doing so that was founded in exist-

The new Rise Switch expands opportunities for independence at work, leisure, and play!

The look of awe and wonder on Bri Sanderson's face is priceless as she turns on a lighted glittery spinning ball all with the gentle touch of a big orange button. This seemingly simple device, the Rise Switch, has proven it can make all the difference in someone's daily life who doesn't have fine motor or manual dexterity.

"Having a child with special needs changes you; Bri changed me," said Landen Sanderson who has adapted numerous toys for his daughter using the new Rise Switch.

"She has opened my eyes and helped me see a need. Kids with special needs want to play and make life fun just like other kids. Sometimes they need special adaptations to their toys."

Together with rehabilitative staff from Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley, volunteer engineers have been modifying toys and devices with assistive technology for people who have physical challenges



Bri loves being able to play with toys which her father Landen has adapted for her with the Rise Switch.

and limited manual mobility and dexterity since 2006.

But when the engineers found that many of the switches to operate the modified products were cost-prohibitive to parents of young children and adult users, they designed a new switch that was simple and affordable.

In 2014, Rise acquired the plans to manufacture and distribute the Rise Switch through a generous grant. Rise workers at Rise's production facility in Spring Lake

Park assemble the Rise Switch and package it for distribution throughout the United States.

The Rise Switch opens up a whole new range of everyday activities for people at home and work. For instance, Rise workers are using them on the job and to operate their communication devices. Kids are using the Rise Switch to play with toys.

The Rise Switch can be plugged into any device that has been manufactured or modified with a low-voltage 3.5mm jack and is perfect for people of all ages to use with:

- * Toys
- * Wheelchairs
- * Laptop computers
- * Small appliances
- * Communication devices
- * Keypads
- * Lights
- * Environmental access

To order a Rise Switch, email info@rise.org. For more information on adapting toys, visit Sanderson's website at SwitchedToys.com.



Matt, a data entry clerk with Rise's Data Ability team in Crystal, says: "I like the Rise Switch; it helps me operate my communication device!" Matt activates the Rise Switch with his head.

1st *Tapping Into Possibilities* a great 'friend-raiser'!

Things were "hops'ing" at 612Brew in Nordeast Minneapolis the evening of July 20 when Rise hosted our first-ever *Tapping Into Possibilities* "friend-raiser." More than 170 people came to support Rise and enjoyed music from Battlelegs (who donated their time and talent!), good food, great beer, terrific raffle prizes (donated by many generous area businesses) -- as well as conversation with lots of really nice guests!

If you were there, thanks so much for coming and we hope you had a good time. If you weren't able to



The band Battlelegs donated their Irish / Celtic music -- and helped make it really festive evening.

Below: Angie Franzen was excited to win one of the fabulous raffle packages.

make it, we plan to make this an annual summer event. Join us July 18, 2016 at Bauhaus Brew Labs in Nordeast!

Big thanks to 612Brew for all their help in making this such a fun event. We also send a special shout-out to Victory Auto and Glass in Fridley and Spring Lake Park Lumber Co. for their generous sponsorships. Check out some photos of the evening on Rise's Flickr page: tinyurl.com/nor8aj2



Special thanks to these great donors and supporters --

- * 612Brew
- * Battlelegs
- * Black Sheep Pizza
- * coup d'etat Uptown
- * Downtown Dogs
- * Erik's Bike, Board & Ski Shop
- * Craig Fontaine
- * Guthrie Theater
- * Jax Cafe
- * Jungle Theater
- * Midwest Supplies
- * Pat's Tap
- * Red Cow Restaurant & Bar
- * Red Stag Supper Club
- * Republic
- * Spoonriver Restaurant
- * Spring Lake Park Lumber
- * Tilia
- * U-Line
- * Varsity Bike Shop
- * Vertical Endeavors
- * Victory Auto Service and Glass



'Give to the Max Day' is November 17

Tens of thousands of Minnesota will be logging in to donate to their favorite charities during this seventh annual 24-hour give-a-thon. Rise will be among the many deserving charities to whom you can give.

We hope we can count on your support! Check it out at: givemn.org/organization/Rise-Incorporated

Rise employees, family & friends enjoy 2nd annual *Celebrate Summer* BBQ picnic!



It was a great way to spend a Minnesota summer Sunday afternoon -- good food BBQ'ed by the Coon Rapids North Star Lions, great friends and co-workers, listening and dancing music by DJ John Thorp, generous supporters -- and plenty of FUN at Aquatore Park in Blaine on August 9. For more picnic photos, check out Rise's Flickr page at: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskhYyTC7>

We appreciate the kind generosity from these donors:

- * Coon Rapids North Star Lions
- * Pentair

- * Balloons Galore & More
- * KLN Family Brands
- * Midwest Vending
- * Nelson's Cheese & Deli



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Register TODAY for our 2015
Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala
Thursday, October 8!

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.

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