

RISE REPORTER

SEPTEMBER 2017 | VOL. 41, NO. 3



Heidi Peterson enjoys her interesting and busy job as a graphic designer at Post-Haste Business Solutions in North Branch where she has worked since May 2009. Post-Haste specializes in customized, high quality printing, packaging, and shipping. Heidi received career planning, job placement, and follow-up support services from Rise's Employment Innovations program's Lindstrom office. *Photo by Tilt Photography*



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A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT LYNN NOREN

"I LOVE my job!!" This is probably the most satisfying comment we hear from the people we serve at Rise -- and we love to share their stories on our website and here in the *Rise Reporter*.

Rise has always been at the forefront of creative, responsive, and customized ways to support people in increasing their self-sufficiency through paid employment opportunities. All of Rise's services are person-centered so that each individual is able to determine his or her own career path to the extent possible. In our 46 years, we estimated that Rise has assisted more than 27,000 people attain meaningful employment and live a fulfilling life.

Last year more than 600 people were hired into competitive jobs. Rise also partners with 50-plus area businesses who contract for supported employment teams through which people benefit from ongoing training and support. In addition, people have the option to work in one of Rise's center-based production facilities.

As always, changes in guidelines, requirements, and regulations are continually being made at the local, state, and federal levels. New federal regulations are now in place to ensure that persons served can choose to work in competitive employment, if that is their desire, and that all individuals are supported in integrated settings to the extent possible. Rise has joined with other peer vocational agencies to work with the Minnesota Department of Human Services in determining how to best "redesign" day services.

Additionally, a new U.S. Department of Labor regulation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, was implemented this past year and requires many of the people we serve at Rise to go through customized career counseling to determine if they choose to redesign their service plans to include a job search.

These changes are exciting and Rise team members are working closely with the people we serve, their families, and other support staff to ensure people are able to pursue their employment goals. We will be strong advocates for the people we are proud to serve, supporting them in navigating through a time of rapid changes in service delivery.

Information is key for all of us, especially in times of change. To help keep everyone up-to-date, I plan to host some informational / listening sessions this fall so that we can all work together to "unlock possibilities and open doors to success" for the people we serve. I hope you will join us. We will also continue to keep you updated and informed in articles in the *Reporter*, on our website, and other forums. Thanks for your continued support!



WHO WE ARE

Rise unlocks possibilities 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 *Celebrate Rise* will be a fabulous event - hope you can join us!
- 04 Summer intern cohort complements Rise team members
- 06 MEC expansion to Greater Minnesota proves valuable
- 07 Welding gives Eric the feeling of accomplishment
- 08 We'd like you to meet some of the great people Rise serves
- 09 Looking for a meaningful, exciting career? Check out Rise!
- 09 Top bidder of online auction enjoys Minnesota Twins suite
- 09 Donation to Rise's Re-Entry program automatically doubles
- 10 Adult Day Program adds two new community service sites
- 11 Aggressive is good neighbor, business partner
- 12 Scenes from *Tapping Into Possibilities* 'Friend-Raiser'

AT RISE

Tom Kettleon
Chair, Rise Board of Directors

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President

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Director of Advancement

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*Life is either
a great adventure
or nothing.*

HELEN KELLER

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

5:30 - 8:30 PM

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MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Kate Raddatz | WCCO-TV News

If you are interested in learning more about sponsorship opportunities,
please contact Noel McCormick at 763-783-2832 or nmccormick@rise.org.

Rise offers wide range of interesting internships

RISE WELCOMED a summer cohort of five interns in June who worked in program areas across the agency, including advancement, mental health, human resources, community innovation, and art therapy.

“We are excited about giving people the opportunity to learn more about nonprofits, social services, and specifically, disability- and employment-related programs,” explained Zoe Leonard-Monrad, Rise’s coordinator of volunteers and recruitment.

“Hopefully, they personally and professionally benefited from their experiences here at Rise and perhaps will consider a career in this field.”

The interns came from a wide range of Minnesota and out-of-state colleges and universities, and studied in a variety of areas.

Danielle (Dani) Banal has one year of study left to go at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She is majoring in child psychology, with a minor in family social science.

“I am interested in childhood mental illness as well as policies involving children and families,” said Dani. “I hope to work in the human service field, and am especially interested in the areas of adoption services, child protection and therapy.

“I chose Rise because I wanted to gain knowledge and experience in the human service field,” she added. “I have really enjoyed going out with other Rise team members and shadowing their meetings they have with the people we serve.



From left are interns of Rise’s summer cohort: Dani Banal, Samantha Schoen, Molly Hou, Rebecca Urban, and Hollie Christensen.

Their stories are so incredible and it has been amazing to see them reach their personal goals.

“Everyone here was really supportive of and excited for all of the interns, and I felt very welcomed. I was comfortable in my role.”

Each intern worked on critical projects for the organization which advance Rise’s mission.

Hollie Christensen plans to graduate in the spring of 2018 from Creighton University in Omaha with a double major in medical anthropology and social work. She hopes to work in social services and then attend graduate school.

“I am interested in understanding the systems and cultural components that shape health inequalities,” Hollie explained. “I also enjoy learning about how public policy influences accessibility to health services.”

Hollie said her internship at Rise gave her the opportunity to better understand the needs and desires of people living with disabilities. She especially enjoyed spending time with and getting to know the people served at the

Community Integration Program (CIP) in Anoka and being able to focus on a project that enhanced community outings and activities in Rise’s day training and habilitation (DT&H) programs.

“I was not expecting to learn about so many different occupations throughout Rise,” Hollie added. “I’ve been able to job shadow and meet with different Rise team members and learn about their jobs such as occupational therapy and art therapy, along with the work of DT&H directors, case managers, and direct support professionals.

“Meeting so many interesting people from across the organization has exposed me to different perspectives and increased my overall awareness regarding the needs of the people Rise serves and the critical services it offers.”

“Because Rise has such diverse programming, we wanted a cohort model for the interns to be able to come together and learn from one another about the different areas and projects they were working on,” Zoe noted. “This also gives



them a good opportunity to meet people with all different backgrounds and career aspirations.”

Molly Hou was an intern with Rise’s Human Resources Department and recently graduated from the University of Minnesota’s School of Management with a degree in accounting and from the College of Liberal Arts with a major in psychology. She would like a career as an organizational psychologist.

“I have enjoyed working closely with Rise’s HR Director Erin Braaten and Generalist Donna Klaphake on day-to-day work activities as well as an overview of the whole HR process,” said Molly. “It’s also been great to connect with the other Rise interns and learn more about the nonprofit world. This was a valuable experience and I appreciated the opportunity.”

Rebecca Urban hopes to incorporate many of the things she’s learned into her career.

She graduated from the University of Sioux Falls in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in art/psychology and is currently attending Adler Graduate School to earn her master’s in art therapy. Rebecca interned alongside Rise’s Art Therapist Stacy Gross with the Art Speaks program and hopes to work with individuals on the autism spectrum.

“Most of my work has been with children so I was excited to work with adults who have a wide range of disabilities,” said Rebecca. “I was so impressed with how each and every project that Stacy did had a purpose and intention behind it. Every project keeps in mind the goal of building a person’s self-esteem, and Stacy works

hard to make sure each projects meets this goal.

“Stacy is so creative and uses many different items to paint with besides paintbrushes!” Rebecca added. “I have really enjoyed my experience and feel like I am coming away with many ideas and concepts I can implement in my future career. I have also been able to facilitate a mindset focused on intentional awareness and paying attention to each individual’s needs.”

Samantha Schoen graduated in May from the University of St. Thomas (UST) in St. Paul with a degree in business administration and management.

“I have always been interested in event planning, and after having my interest in non-profit organizations be sparked through one of my courses at UST, fundraising and advancement was the career path that combined these two passions of mine,” said Samantha.

Samantha was part of the Rise Advancement team which is currently planning the upcoming *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala* in October.

“In acquiring donations for

our upcoming gala, I have built some great relationships with local metropolitan businesses, large and small,” she noted. “It is amazing to see how many people are happy to give what they can, as well as their gratitude for the impact our organization makes in the lives of the people we serve.

“My supervisor, Noel McCormick, and coworkers were always willing to offer me their help and allowed me to sit in on anything they think would expand my knowledge in the field of advancement. I am also extremely impressed with the cohort Rise put together for us interns which I think really enhanced all of our experiences.”

While a job offer at the end of an internship is not guaranteed (although President Lynn Noren began her career as a college intern at Rise in 1979!), Rise has hired some great people as a result. Samantha was pleased to accept a full-time position in Rise’s Advancement Department as a development associate at the end of August.

Internship positions are posted on Rise’s website at www.rise.org/jobs.



Hollie Christensen spends one-on-one time with Joe Laughlin at the Community Integration Program in Anoka.

Only program of its kind in the U.S., MEC expands into Greater Minnesota

IN ITS 25 YEARS of services, the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) for People Who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing has assisted more than 2,000 men and women plan their careers, find great jobs, and retain successful employment.

MEC was co-established by Rise, Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Lifetrack Resources, Inc. in 1993.

Two years ago, MEC was able to expand its customized services across the state with funding from the Minnesota State Legislature; it received funding for another year in July 2017.

With its main office in St. Paul serving people in the Twin Cities metro area, MEC occupational communication specialists (OCS) now have offices throughout the state.

Mary Soltis serves people in the northeast corner of the state with an office in Duluth; Wendy June works in southern Minnesota with an office in Faribault; Caitlin Lashbrook serves people in the

west-central area from an office in St. Cloud; and Rebecca Benke works in the northwest corner with an office in Moorhead.

“We are excited to bring the full range of MEC services to people in Greater Minnesota,” said MEC Program Coordinator Blaine Newberg. “Many of the people we are currently working with in smaller Minnesota towns have not had the kinds of specialized services they need to be successful in the workforce. More than 160 people have accessed MEC’s customized career planning, job placement, occupational communication, and follow-up support services in the past two years through this expansion. That’s exciting.”

“The OCSes work hand-in-hand with professionals from other local agencies and Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offices to ensure that each individual gets the services they need to be successful in the workplace,” said Service Team Leader Sheila Ritter.

People served by MEC are

working in a wide range of industries, including welding, graphic design, advertising, car detailing, retail, hospitality, and manufacturing, to name just a few.

Having earned a two-year degree in machine technology and working in various machinist positions since the mid-1990s, Joe Jesme was pleased to find a good job with Talon Innovations Corp. in Sauk Rapids, Minnesota. He works on Swiss lathe machines to produce small, intricate parts for semiconductor equipment.

When Joe was originally hired more than a year ago, his VR counselor, Barb Smith, suggested he connect with MEC for job coaching and follow-up support services. He meets twice a month with Caitlin to address any work-related concerns.

Joe is hard of hearing and communicates primarily with American Sign Language (ASL); at work, he communicates by lip-reading and writing brief notes back and forth. With good co-workers and a supportive supervisor, Joe says that Talon is a great place to work and doesn’t even mind much the 100-mile roundtrip each day!

Earlier this year, Blaine and Sheila presented about MEC at a nationwide conference sponsored by the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA) held in Portland, Ore. After meeting people from across the country, they realized there is not likely another program in the U.S offering the full range of customized employment-related services for people who are Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing as does MEC.

For more information, contact Blaine at bnewberg@rise.org; 651-265-2429; VP: 651-998-8660.

MEC Occupational Communication Specialist Caitlin Lashbrook meets with Joe Jesme about twice a month to help ensure things continue to go well at his job with Talon Innovations in Sauk Rapids.



Overcoming some major obstacles, Eric has much to be proud of at the end of the day

By Ian Plitnick,

Development Manager

ERIC REALLY ENJOYS the feeling of accomplishment when creating something with his own hands. He learned his welding skills nine years ago when he was working at a heavy equipment manufacturing company in North Dakota.

During the past three years, Eric has experienced some major obstacles which have affected his career and his personal life. He struggled with mental illness and also had a criminal conviction. As a result, he had a difficult time finding and maintaining a job.

In need of a fresh start, Eric moved to St. Cloud to be closer to his mom and stepdad, since he considers them his biggest supporters and champions.

Eric was referred to Nicci Steinhofner, an employment specialist with Rise's Central Minnesota Works program in St. Cloud, who assisted Eric in finding a welding job near his home. Nicci started by contacting several local companies who were looking for welders.

Nicci knew that she would have to take an innovative approach to Eric's job search. She personally called human resources managers to address his criminal conviction because she wanted to ease any concerns that a potential employer might have. Nicci also coached Eric on interviewing skills and the best way to discuss his criminal background.



With Nicci's dedicated support and encouragement, they found him the perfect job as a welder at a local manufacturing company which makes gas supply tubing. Eric was hired as a full-time welder and it has been a tremendous boost to his self-esteem.

"I really like working with my hands and having something to show for it at the end of the workday," Eric said. "Welding requires a great attention to detail, such as making sure your materials are at the perfect temperature. I like the independence of welding and having to make on-the-spot decisions to achieve 100 percent quality."

Eric says he can see himself at this job for many years to come. Nicci is proud of Eric and the progress he is making in his life and career.

Even though Eric is busy with his new job, he still finds plenty of time for hobbies. When the sun is shining and the weather is warm, he is ready with his fishing pole, fresh bait, and tackle box to fish one of the many lakes around St. Cloud.

He also likes to pitch in to help a family member with a deck project or house painting. Building cabinets in his stepdad's woodworking shop is another hobby Eric really enjoys.

We'd like you to meet --

Check out rise.org/our-story/success-stories/ for their and others' complete stories



Shawn Lovejoy -

WITH HIS BOOMING VOICE and signature purple or pink polo shirt, Shawn Lovejoy is hard to miss in a crowd. Yet the one thing that makes Shawn stand out even more is his outgoing and uplifting personality.

"I'm basically a happy-go-lucky, positive kind of guy," said Shawn. "Even though I was dealt a hard blow, I try to make others smile."

Back in 1988, Shawn was a junior at the University of Minnesota, "loving life on campus," and hoping to get into the U's Carlson School of Management so he could fulfill his dream of being a stockbroker. A motorcycle crash and subsequent traumatic brain injury changed his life forever.

Following years of rehab facilities and working part-time, Shawn came to Rise in 2004 and works in the Connections program. "I have a really good work ethic and don't fool around – I get things done to the best of my ability," Shawn noted proudly. Read the rest of Shawn's story online.

Sarah Lambert -

TURNING SARAH'S PASSION and love of four-legged animals into a business venture has resulted in Sarah's Cat & Doggy Daycare in Fridley. She hopes to be "your best friend's second best friend."

With assistance from Rise's Employment Consultant Amber Barnes, and much-appreciated support from her extended family, Sarah launched her pet-sitting service in January. She offers day and evening pet-sitting as well as short- and long-term boarding for cats and dogs (small- to mid-sized).

"I have always loved dogs and cats and am often asked to take care of others' pets when my friends or family go on vacation or are away," Sarah said. "So I decided to take what I really enjoy and start my own business."

Read more about Sarah on Rise's website.



Mikias Tilahun -

BORN IN ETHIOPIA, Mikias Tilahun attended boarding school in the United Kingdom before moving to Minnesota in 2000 where he finished high school. He started work at Rise in 2003.

Mikias is always looking to improve his work skills, and over the years, has held eight different jobs in area businesses through Rise's Creative Partnerships South program. In addition to working on a wide range of jobs at Rise, he also cleans tables part-time at Poor Richards Common-house restaurant in Bloomington.

Rise is Mikias' favorite place to work as he is kept quite busy with a wide range of different jobs. At the end of the work day, Mikias gives the work floor a final cleaning.

Written by Michael Sack, read Mikias's complete story online.





People benefit from personal growth, fitness, and recreational activities offered at Rise's four Adult Day Program locations

WHEN THE KIDS FROM Fridley Public Schools' Tiger Club delivered a large, brightly decorated poster they made welcoming Rise's Adult Day Program to the Fridley Community Center (FCC) on August 1, Program Director Judy Andersen knew for sure this was going to be a great collaboration.

"I was amazed and delighted – everyone here has made us feel so welcomed!" said Judy.

Due to the increased request for services, Rise has added two new Adult Day Programs (ADP): at the FCC and the Maplewood Community Center YMCA. Rise also offers ADP services at the Emma B. Howe Northtown Family YMCA in Coon Rapids and the Mounds View YMCA / Community Center.

"From our initial discussions with Fridley Community Education Coordinator Stephen Keeler on expanding our program to this site, the FCC team has had wonderful ideas about how we can integrate people served in Adult Day into the many interesting programs they have here."

Together the two groups came up with great ways people could access FCC resources. People who are ages 60 and above can attend any of the center's senior programs, including lunchtime dining, watching movies, and playing bingo.

The FCC's sewing group has been generous with their time and talents. They brought in handmade quilts and plan to make lap quilts



Adult Day Program Coordinator Judy Andersen is excited about the new expansion of services to the Fridley Community Center (shown here) and the Maplewood Community Center YMCA.

as well as sew lumbar pillows for people's comfort while sitting in chairs. In the coming months, people may opt to volunteer spending time with kids in the FCC's Tiger Club day care program.

Prior to its opening on August 14, Judy also worked with staff from the Maplewood Community Center YMCA to discuss programming opportunities and determine how the two agency teams can work together.

"I'm confident we are going to enjoy the same kind of program partnership at Maplewood as we enjoy at our other three ADP sites," Judy noted.

ADP offers specialized recreational, personal growth, and health-related services for people who have a brain injury or physical disability such as multiple sclerosis or arthritis.

The program provides unique opportunities for creating friendships and developing new possibil-

ities for personal growth.

With individual, flexible scheduling, people can create their full-time or part-time schedule to suit their personal needs. Depending on the Rise Adult Day location, people can choose to participate in a wide range of activities, including art and music therapies, cooking and nutrition, YMCA group classes and events, fitness activities, volunteer community service projects, as well as social and learning activities.

Those attending range in age from the mid-20s to retirement age. Rise's ADP team members are trained in CPR and first aid as well as medication administration; several are also certified as brain injury specialists.

For more information regarding Rise's Adult Day Programs, please contact Judy Andersen at: 763-567-0626; jandersen@rise.org.

Rise workers meet Aggressive Industries' quality, ISO standards

RISE AND AGGRESSIVE Industries have been “good neighbors” since both companies opened their doors across the street from each other on Sunset Road in Spring Lake Park in 1971 and 1972, respectively. Through the years, Rise and Aggressive have also developed a mutually beneficial working partnership.

Recognized nationally for its high quality “rotomolding” plastics manufacturing capabilities, Aggressive has subcontracted with Rise on many different projects over the past decades.

In May, they contacted Rise Sales and Marketing Representative John Nielsen to quote on some assemblies. John discussed the benefits of having a team at their location to perform the work and Aggressive was open to the idea. Starting with three people, the team expanded to seven in August.

Aggressive manufactures products for other companies in a wide range of industries, including the military, manufacturing, agriculture, chemical, recreation and sporting, as well as toys and juvenile



Tessa Dupay, Alex Blaisdell, Steve Randall, and Rise Direct Support Professional Diana Gangl enjoy the variety of work at Aggressive.

products, and material-handling parts such as totes and bins.

They also have proprietary products of their own such as the SuperDeck Floating Dock System found on waterways throughout the country.

“Our Rise team is really enjoying the variety of work at Aggressive,” said John. “The tasks and jobs can change on a daily basis which people seem to really like. Everyone is focused on meeting Aggressive’s high standards of quality workmanship and their good work is appreciated by Aggressive managers and employees.”

Among the current products

people are working on are assembling plastic totes and bins of various sizes and shapes; others are assembling hand-washing stations found in public places and private companies. Both products have a multi-step process which calls for precision and attention to detail.

“Rise workers are enthusiastic people who have a very positive attitude and always want to do their best to help us meet our production goals,” said Greg Levendoski, Aggressive’s production supervisor. “We’re excited to be moving forward with some new projects.”

“We like that Rise provides an on-site supervisor,” noted Shelly Peterson, ISO (International Organization for Standardization) compliance manager. “We very much appreciate their ability to meet and support Aggressive’s quality and ISO compliance standards seamlessly. We are all on the same team, with the same goals. You can see the benefits throughout the production floor and processes.”

“It’s great having such a nice long partnership which we hope will only continue to develop,” John added.

Theresa Brun brings a positive attitude and attention to detail to her work and is proud to be part of the hard-working team at Aggressive Industries.





CHECK OUT EXCITING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT RISE!



Rise is all about people and potential. We embrace a culture of learning through extensive training and career development opportunities. Rise offers competitive salaries and benefit package, a fun, fast-paced work environment, and the chance to make a real difference in people's lives. Here is Michelle Thompson, a job developer from Rise's Employment Innovations program, with Robert Kreitz who works at the Shopko store in North Branch.

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

Jodi Jockisch is online auction winner of a Target Field suite

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS to top-bidder Jodi Jockisch who took home 24 tickets in Suite 49 at Target Field to watch the Minnesota Twins take on the Milwaukee Brewers August 7. Family and friends joined Jodi at the game.

Proceeds from the online auction went directly to support Rise's program services. We appreciate Jodi's generous bid!

Special thanks to the Minnesota Ballpark Authority for their generosity in donating this suite for fundraising purposes.



Want to double your donation to Rise?

Rise has a fantastic matching gift opportunity! The Otto Bremer Trust will match gifts to our Central Minnesota Works Re-Entry Program in St. Cloud dollar-for-dollar for first-time and lapsed donors. In the past three years, this program has supported 176 ex-offenders in their employment goals.

There are several ways to you can give:

- Go to the Re-Entry project page on Rise's GiveMN site at givemn.org/organization/rise-incorporated.
- Unsure about your giving history or want to make a gift over the phone? Call Rise at 763-783-2832 and we'll help you out.
- Gifts through the mail can be sent to Rise at 8406 Sunset Road NE, Spring Lake Park, MN 55432.

Please be sure to note your gift is for *Re-Entry* on your envelope or check. *Thank you for your support!*

Scenes from Rise's 3rd Annual Tapping Into Possibilities held at Bauhaus Brew Labs on July 17

Top row: **1.** Supporters enjoyed cold craft beers on this hot Minnesota summer night. **2.** Heidi Palmer helped lay out a fabulous spread with donated dishes from several area restaurants and delis. **Second row:** **3.** The band *Ruby in the Clouds* provided great music. **4.** The back patio at Bauhaus was a favorite spot to enjoy good conversation. *Photos by Brian Tanning*



To see more photos from special events, check out Rise's Facebook photo albums at: facebook.com/Rise.Incorporated/photos

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