

# RISE REPORTER

MARCH 2017 | VOL. 41, NO. 1



## WORKING ON HIS FUTURE

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## A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT LYNN NOREN

The 2017 Legislative Session is underway! This is a very important year to pass legislation related to services for people who have disabilities. I'd like to share a few key priorities and ask for your support in helping us advocate for legislation that has been introduced this session. Unlike most businesses in our community, Rise's funding and resources are dependent on action of the Minnesota Legislature. We need your help to tell our story and help ensure funding remains in place for the people we serve.

Rise is hosting a Family & Advocates Meeting on March 21 starting at 5:30 p.m. at Rise's Spring Lake Park office to discuss legislative priorities and how you can HELP! We hope you will join us!

At Rise, we believe that individuals with disabilities should have access to high quality employment and day services of their choice. Two of the key legislative initiatives we are supporting this session are:

1. Address the Workforce Shortage. Rise's direct support team members are critical to providing quality and effective services to individuals with disabilities and are vital to achieving the goals of two key federal initiatives that the State of Minnesota is implementing plans for: the Olmstead Plan and the Home and Community-Based Settings Rule. Currently, a critical shortage of workers and a high staff turnover rate exists in community-based disability services across the state. It is essential to advance targeted funding for direct support professional wages and health care benefits to hire and maintain highly trained and high quality team members. You can support a rate increase that would be used to increase pay for direct support professionals.

*Bill: House File 873 / Senate File 669*

2. Ensure Employment & Day Services Sustainability. Minnesota has been working since 2007 to develop and implement new rate methodologies for all services funded under the Medicaid Waiver. As Minnesota continues to move forward this new system called Disability Waiver Rate Setting or DWRS, we must preserve the quality and integrity of the existing infrastructure of employment and day supports and other services for individuals with disabilities throughout the state. The system must also include the development of new community employment services that best serve individuals according to their own choices and needs. At this time, many providers like Rise are forecasted to see significant rate reductions with the implementation of DWRS. We are working with a coalition of advocates and provider associations to pass legislation to modify DWRS this session.

*Bill: House File 814 / Senate File 727*

Now more than ever, it is important for people we serve and their families to understand the changes that are happening related to changing federal and state policies. Our collective voices are needed to make positive impact and assure a bright future. Please join us!



## 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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## AT RISE

**Tom Kettleson**  
Chair, Rise Board of Directors

**Lynn Noren**  
President

**Noel McCormick**  
Director of Advancement

**Beth DePoint**  
Director of Public Relations; Editor

## ON THE COVER

**Michael Sack, a data entry clerk at Rise's Data Ability program in Bloomington, hopes to combine his love of sports with his writing talents in a new career, thanks to a grant from the Greater Twin Cities United Way. Read more on page 6.**



## *Pierre & Riziki are filled with hope for a new life in the US*

HAVING LIVED IN various refugee camps throughout Africa since he was a child, Pierre Gatera dreamed of offering his three children a better life – one of hope, security, and accomplishment.

Pierre's parents escaped Burundi to Rwanda where they lived as refugees until 1994. Born in Rwanda in 1975 as a refugee, Pierre and his birth family escaped from Rwanda back to their native country of Burundi when war broke out in 1994. Continually fleeing from rebel fighters, Pierre moved to Nairobi, Kenya, in 1997, and finally to the Kakuma Refugee camp, located in one of the poorest regions in northwestern Kenya. There, long-term refugees dealt with malnutrition and serious health issues, and lived lives of hopelessness and desperation.

“Living in a hostile environment, you don't get to think about the future,” Pierre explained, “because you are dealing with just meeting your daily needs of food, health, and safety. It is a very oppressive way of life.”

Despite their deprived living conditions, Pierre was grateful to receive an education and join a Christian International Pentecostal Holiness Church. He thrived on his involvement with his fellow parishioners and was active in the choir, teaching Sunday school, and helping start a Bible school with the pastor. Pierre would go on to become a teacher, pastor, and principal of the Kakuma Interdenominational School of Mission college.

Pierre met Riziki Appoline while they were both living in the Kakuma camp in 1997. She, too, was active in their church community. Pierre and Riziki married four years later and are now the proud parents of a son



and two daughters, ages 6 to 14.

The family was sponsored by Ar-rive Ministry and immigrated to the Twin Cities in September 2016.

“It was so beautiful – so green and the air was so clean,” Pierre remembers of their first impressions. “They had warned us about the Minnesota winters, but we still wanted to come here. We heard people are very nice.”

Today Pierre and his family are grateful for their comfortable, three-bedroom apartment in South Minneapolis. The kids attend school and enjoy playing in a nearby park.

The family attends Northwood Church in Maple Grove and are grateful to the many wonderful members who support them by driving them to Sunday services and Wednesday night kids' programs, taking them grocery shopping, and helping them assimilate into American culture and life in Minnesota.

Because the family was receiving MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program or welfare) from Hennepin County, they were referred to Rise's Pathways for Refugees program. Placement Specialist Mohamed Daher (left in the photo) assisted Pierre with career planning, applying for

jobs, placement, and critical follow-up support services.

Mohamed had also lived a refugee camp before he immigrated to the U.S. in January 2013, so he understands the tremendous challenges Pierre and his family face.

Pierre was recently hired as a janitor with Marsden Services and works from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. with a crew at Target Plaza in downtown Minneapolis. Riziki was excited to get a job with Air Serv Facilities Services as an aircraft cabin agent.

“We needed Mohamed's assistance and very much appreciate his support, advice, and help so we can achieve my dreams,” Pierre added. “I believe that God blesses us so we can bless others.”

After working overnight and getting the kids off to school, Pierre and Riziki head back downtown to the International Education Center where they attend about four hours of classes to help with their English, as well as better understand U.S. government policies and systems, and American culture.

“We want to adapt to our new life as fast as we can,” Pierre added. “It is so good to have freedom and dignity.”

## Joanna's clerical skills and welcoming personality make her a perfect fit for job at Warners' Stellian Appliance store

by Ian Plitnick, Development Manager

MOST MINNESOTANS KNOW that if they are looking to purchase home appliances, they will likely find just what they need at a Warners' Stellian Appliance store. Family-owned since 1954, they offer quality products, installation, and service.

As an administrative assistant / receptionist at the Maple Grove store, one of Joanna Douthitt's primary duties is to help ensure incoming customers are matched with a sales representative in a timely manner. Her friendly, welcoming personality makes her a natural for the position.

"I love this job because I get to meet and talk with so many nice people – it's always interesting," said Joanna. "And I work with the coolest people ever."

In her senior year at Coon Rapids High School, Joanna volunteered at a school where she did a number of administrative and clerical tasks. She discovered she

really enjoyed working in an office.

When she came to Rise for employment services in 2010, Joanna wanted to hone her clerical skills so she worked in Rise's Accounting Department and at the front office reception desk.

With assistance from a Rise job placement specialist, Joanna was hired as a cashier at a Target store where she worked successfully for four years. A back ailment forced her to find a new job that didn't require her to be on her feet so much.

Together with Rise Placement Specialist Cid Rode, Joanna developed an updated resume and cover letter. When she found a posting for an administrative assistant at Warners' Stellian Appliance store, it was the just job she wanted!

Joanna nailed the interview and was hired in May 2016. She currently works part-time, mostly evenings and weekends.

"I love getting to do so many

different things," said Joanna. "Besides greeting people and finding them a sales person, I transfer sales calls, set up and manage customer service calls, and run a daily credit report to make sure all the sales transactions match up and are reconciled. I also write up appliance accessory sales like water filters or kits for outdoor grills – I earn a commission for those!"

"It's a lot of responsibility, but I'm good with details and am a good multi-tasker," Joanna added proudly. "I also know I can ask for help if I need it because I have really wonderful co-workers."

"Joanna has been a great addition to our team," said Store Manager Tim Warner. "Her friendly personality, flexibility and adaptiveness are all things we value at Warners' Stellian. We appreciate Joanna and look forward to working with her for a long time."

"Since Joanna started working at Warners' Stellian, her confidence has grown and she has become much more of a self-advocate," Cid noted. "Working at a job she loves and where she feels valued are key to her success."

Newly engaged, Joanna and her fiancé Patrick, who works at a Walgreens store in Minneapolis, are busy planning for their future. They are considering a wedding in Las Vegas and will be looking for an apartment soon. In their free time, they enjoy movies, music, and computers.

"It can get crazy-busy, but I just love it!" said Joanna.

*Joanna enjoys the wide range of tasks she performs in her administrative assistant position at the Warners' Stellian Appliance store in Maple Grove.*





## More than 180 people help create mosaic hot air balloons

A COLLECTIVE ‘WOW!’ was heard at the recent unveiling on February 14 of a most spectacular collaborative *Art for All* project. The expansive five-piece mosaic display stretches down the hallway leading to the production floor at Rise’s Spring Lake Park administrative offices. It was created by people served at Rise, team members, and community volunteers who invested more than 400 hours over the past few months.

“We know that this beautiful and unifying piece of art will ‘lift’ spirits and inspire hope for everyone here at Rise for years to come,” said President Lynn Noren. “We are so appreciative of the Greater Twin Cities United Way for their generous funding as well as organizing this *Art for All* project.”

Rise is one of four local agencies to participate in this project.

“The goal was to bring people together at the table to work, talk, and create a piece of beauty,” explained Mica Lee Anders, a teaching artist with COMPAS. This nonprofit organization has been putting creativity into the hands of Minnesotans by teaching through art for more than 40 years.

Mica first conducted listening sessions with Rise team members to help develop an overall concept for the project. From those discussions, Mica came up with the hot air balloon theme.

“The ‘Rise’ and hot air balloon connection is obvious,” Mica noted, who is shown above working with artisans. “But we also wanted the balloons to be uplifting, joyful, and full of movement.”

“Moreover, we wanted to make sure that everyone could partic-

ipate in the creation of this art piece,” explained Art Therapist Stacy Gross with Rise’s Art Speaks program and who was a key contributor to the *Art for All* project. “The process had to be inclusive so that even people who have mobility, dexterity, or visual challenges could join in the fun.”

More than 180 artisans adhered multi-colored stones, shells, beads, and other special items to the balloon and cloud outlines. The five pieces were then grouted, framed, and hung at Rise.

“These amazing mosaic balloons are something, not only to look at and enjoy, but feel with your fingers and be inspired by,” Stacy added. “I think they have far exceeded our original expectations.”

See the back page of this *Rise Reporter* for additional photos.

## Grant from Greater Twin Cities United Way provides job placement services to people with significant challenges

“MY ULTIMATE DREAM JOB would be working for a sports organization doing data entry or communications,” said Mike Sack, who currently works as a data entry clerk for Rise’s Data Ability program in Bloomington.

Mike is one of several job-seekers receiving customized career planning and competitive job placement services made possible through a special grant from the Greater Twin Cities United Way. This funding is specifically for people served in Rise’s day training and habilitation (DT&H) programs.

“People served through this grant each have significant chal-

lenges to getting a position in the competitive job market,” Dan Meyers, Rise’s manager of Vocational Evaluation & Transitional Services, explained.

“This funding enables Rise to assist about 30 people who might not otherwise receive job placement services. We are working hard to ensure that people receive the support they need to find a good job in the community.”

“I think a job working with a sports team like handling their social media sites or writing for their website would be perfect for me because I follow every major Minnesota sports team,” Mike, who is 27, said. “I also have a ton

of writing experience as I co-write the ‘Two Men On’ blog, which now has more than 94,300 views.”

Rise’s Placement Specialist Sandra Pelava is working with Mike in his job search. The two meet weekly to talk about employment and internship opportunities. Mike noted that the major obstacles they are currently tackling to find just the right job are identifying companies who are hiring and willing to talk, and then securing PCA (personal care attendant) assistance for him on the job.

“If Sandy or I find a job that looks promising, we chat about what is next, and sometimes call the company to learn more. This past summer, Sandy helped me secure a press pass to attend the St. Paul Saints to cover however many games I wanted for my blog. So that could be a great start to a potential job opportunity.

“I also had an informational interview with the Minnesota Twins last spring to see what kind of jobs were available and to learn how the job application process works.”

Lane Mooney, who is 52, has worked through Rise’s Day Training and Habilitation Sensory Support Unit for close to 20 years. He currently works on a wide range of subcontracts in Rise’s Spring Lake Park production facility.

Lane has also worked in area businesses, including HOM Furniture in Coon Rapids where he prepped furniture for home delivery and showroom display, putting

*Lane Mooney loves working with electrical components and can fix almost anything!*





knobs on dressers, legs on sofas, etc. In addition, Lane worked at the Grassroots Coop in Anoka where he helped unload shipments, stock shelves, and clean until the store closed in November 2016.

Through this grant, Lane is working with Angela Mannila, an occupational communication specialist/placement specialist, to find a job in the community for which his skills and interests are well-suited. Lane will also be working with State Services for the Blind to fund job tryouts during his job search.

As a young student, Lane received some vocational training when he attended the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault where his interest in all things electrical was likely “sparked.”

Lane enjoys constructing electrical creations and will spend hours at his own work bench taking things apart and putting them back together or fixing them -- especially if they have a lighted screen like a laptop computer or cell phone.

Mary Richards has been a data entry clerk with Rise’s Data Ability program in Crystal for about five years. She is self-taught in her computer skills and has had other



*Mary Richards would love to put her life experiences to work as a one-to-one job coach or mentor.*

receptionist and clerical positions before coming to Rise at age 60.

Mary is working with Rise Placement Specialist Sarah Gustafson to develop an updated career plan.

“My dream job would be to be a peer mentor or job coach and work one-on-one with people helping them on the job,” Mary explained. “I think that my willingness to use

my own life experiences of living with a brain injury, plus my own survival skills, could really help others to succeed.”

“This United Way grant will enable my team and I to open doors to new employment opportunities,” Dan added. “We are excited about the possibilities and offer our sincere thanks to the United Way for their generous funding.”

## *Rise expands placement services to Washington County*

RISE IS PLEASED TO BEGIN a new partnership with Washington County to provide employment services for people who have serious mental illness and are receiving case management services.

The one-year contract will run through November 30. The main focus of the program is to provide

employment placement and support services with a focus on individual choice, community integration, and independence.

This program is made possible with funding from an existing Adult Mental Health Grant.

Sarah Kohl-Leaf, a Rise placement specialist, will work out of

two Washington County Community Services offices located at: 14949 62nd Street North in Stillwater, and 13000 Ravine Parkway South in Cottage Grove.

For more information or to make a referral, please contact Program Manager Becky Rother, 763-792-2432; [brother@rise.org](mailto:brother@rise.org).

## We'd like you to meet --

Check out [rise.org/our-story/success-stories/](http://rise.org/our-story/success-stories/) for theirs and others' complete stories



### *Briana Bergeron -*

BRIANA'S ABILITY TO QUICKLY LEARN new job tasks and her solid work ethic make her a valued employee at the Taco John's restaurant in Forest Lake where she has worked three days a week since July 2016.

Equally appreciative of her reliability and hard work are her Employment Innovations co-workers with whom she cleans a number of business sites throughout the East Central Minnesota area two days a week. In the summer, Briana also works on the lawn crews which has mowing and trimming contracts throughout the area.

"At Taco John's, I take orders and run the cash register, work at the drive-through window, do some food prep, and clean the lobby and dining room areas," said Briana proudly. "I have really nice co-workers and I think they like the work I do." Read more about Briana online.

### *Lyle Wedebrand*

TO SAY THAT LYLE WEDEBRAND HAS WORKED in a number of companies throughout his 23 years at Rise is an understatement. But unlike some people who tend to job-hop, Lyle moves around a lot because he's good at what he does and Rise production site managers appreciate having him on their team.

"I tend to be a perfectionist," said Lyle. "I don't ever want my work to come back to me because it wasn't done right so I always double-check it."

Yet no matter what job Lyle has had over the years – cutting expensive leather for seat covers at Amcon in Fridley, cleaning rooms at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Minneapolis, scanning and computerizing construction blueprints for Minco in Fridley, or collating school textbooks at MuscleBound Bindery in North Minneapolis (to mention just a few!), Lyle brings his A-game to each and every work site. Read Lyle's online story.



## 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 Medical Support Specialist Joann Flynn at Creative Partnerships South in Bloomington with Rachel Dinga.

For current job openings, visit Rise's website at [rise.org/jobs](http://rise.org/jobs)



## Despite fluctuations in the manufacturing industry, Bruce Hixon builds his career with support from MEC

HAVING SUCCESSFULLY worked as a machinist since 1977, Bruce Hixon was dismayed when the company he had been working for close to 25 years closed abruptly after 9/11 as the manufacturing industry began to struggle.

Skilled and motivated, Bruce had worked hard to build his career despite fluctuations in the business climate. He attended Technical Vocational Institute (now St. Paul College) to learn to read computer blueprints and hone his highly technical machinist skills. Bruce also attended Hennepin Technical College for ABE (Adult Basic Education) classes to help improve his English skills.

Through an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter, Bruce explained that since 2002, he has received support and benefited from working with counselors at Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) as well as occupational communication specialists (OCS) at Rise's Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) for People who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing.

With a family to support, Bruce worked in a national retail chain's warehouse for three years before finding employment in his chosen career field.

In 2005 he was happy to find a good job with a printing company where he could put his machinist skills to work. A co-worker, who was also deaf, helped train Bruce in on the job which he enjoyed for about five years.



*Bruce Hixon is proud of his CNC machinist career at JEM Technical in Orono.*

Interested in returning to the manufacturing industry, Bruce went to VR in 2013 where Ron Adams assisted him with updating his resume, as well as applying and interviewing for suitable jobs.

Bruce was happy to be hired at JEM Technical in Orono as a CNC (computer numeric-controlled) machinist in 2013 working with the highly complex heavy machinery.

Located in Orono, JEM Technical has been designing, manufacturing, and distributing integrated custom valves and controls for fluid power applications since 1989. JEM is ISO-9001 certified and works with a wide range of industries, including lawn and turf, construction, forestry, mining, aerial and crane, marine, agriculture, and trucking.

After 90 days on the job, Blaine Newberg from MEC began meeting with Bruce about once a

week to help address any training, work, and communication issues.

OCS Sheila Ritter continued to follow up with Bruce and provided ASL interpreting as he added new job duties or training until the summer of 2016 when he no longer required MEC support.

Bruce said he finds the work interesting and his JEM co-workers are great to work with. He communicates with them primarily through writing notes; one of his supervisors knows some ASL which Bruce says is quite helpful.

Bruce works four ten-hour days starting at 3:30 p.m. His dog Cali licks him awake when she thinks Bruce has been sleeping long enough!

Bruce and his wife live in Plymouth; they have three adult children and seven grandchildren. The couple enjoys spending time with their family camping, fishing, cooking, and going to the zoo.

# Cow Tipping Press develops writers at ADP

PEOPLE SERVED IN Rise's Adult Day Program (ADP) in Golden Valley had the opportunity to participate this past fall in a two-part creative writing class put on by Cow Tipping Press.

Given a theme or open-ended question, music or poetry, people were encouraged to simply write their thoughts and reactions or what came into minds. The results were amazing!

If they were not able to write, Bryan Boyce, founder and director of Cow Tipping Press, and ADP team members assisted in transcribing their words to paper.

Margarett Warmasley was asked to read a piece she wrote titled, "My Mom," at a special reading on December 1 at the Minneapolis City Center downtown; it was part of the Hennepin Theatre Trust's weekly *5 to 10 on Hennepin* project. She read her piece beautifully and answered several questions from the audience. Several people came up to Margarett afterward to congratulate her.

Margarett's piece is also included in a book *Cow Tipping* published; here is a link to it: [www.cowtippingpress.org](http://www.cowtippingpress.org).



*Natalie Worthy proudly read one of her written pieces to others served in the Adult Day Program.*



*RISE AND HOM FURNITURE in Coon Rapids have enjoyed "a partnership that works!" for many years. At a recent annual awards ceremony, Operations Personnel Manager Dan Lentz (far left) acknowledged the individual and collective contribution people from Rise have made in HOM's recycling of furniture packaging materials. Dan noted that in 2016, they recycled more than 2 million pounds of cardboard, 52,000 pounds of plastic, and 18,000 pounds of Styrofoam. The Rise team is a group of proud, hard-working men and women!*

## ARE YOU AN AMAZON.COM SHOPPER?

**AMAZONSMILE** is a simple and automatic way for you to support Rise every time you shop at no cost to you! When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com with the **ADDED BONUS** that Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase price to Rise. This link will take you directly to the page to link your account to Rise: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/41-0972476>

Mark your calendars  
for these upcoming  
special Rise events --  
Hope to see you there!

**Families  
& Advocates  
Meeting**

March 21, 5:30p.m.

*President Lynn Noren  
will meet with families,  
guardians, and advocates  
to discuss critical current policies  
and legislative issues with  
suggested ways to get involved.*

Rise Administrative Offices  
8406 Sunset Road N.E.  
Spring Lake Park

**Celebrate  
Talent!**

April 25, 7 - 8:30p.m.

*A fun showcase of  
people's talents!*

\* Free admission \*  
Doors open at 6p.m.  
for light refreshments

Fridley High School Auditorium,  
6000 West Moore Lake Drive

**Celebrate Rise  
Fundraising Gala**

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

A wonderful evening of  
fine food, games, live auction,  
awards and much more!

Sponsorship and ticket information  
available this spring  
Minneapolis Marriott Northwest,  
Brooklyn Park

**Tapping  
Into Possibilities  
"Friend-Raiser"**

July 17, 5 - 7:30 p.m.

Fabulous live music, food,  
beers, silent auction  
and door prizes!

Advance tickets: 763-792-2448

**Bauhaus Brew Lab**  
1315 Tyler St. N.E., Minneapolis

**Volunteer  
Appreciation  
Open House**

April 27, 5 - 7 p.m.

We'd like to say  
'thank you'  
for your generous gifts  
of time and talents!

Rise Administrative Offices  
8406 Sunset Road N.E.  
Spring Lake Park



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

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**Scenes from Rise's 'Art for All' mosaic project -- Read the full story on page 5.**

**Top row photos: 1-3.** These volunteers from Divi Up, Eli Lilly, and Wells Fargo were among the 180+ people who enjoyed the collaborative, creative process. **Second row: 4.** The five pieces hang in the hallway leading to the production floor at Rise's administrative offices in Spring Lake Park. **5.** Volunteers from DecoPac in Anoka were excited to see the finished project; they worked on the orange and yellow balloons in the early stages. **6.** Rise's Art Therapist Stacy Gross, COMPAS Teaching Artist Mica Lee Anders, and Rise's Volunteer Coordinator Zoe Leonard-Monrad were instrumental in creating this project.



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

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