

RISE REPORTER



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The past few months have been challenging for everyone as the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic. Read how Rise team members, the people we serve, and our business partners have adapted. Caption information for these photos is on the back cover.



RISE REPORTER

A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT LYNN NOREN

In the past three months, life has changed significantly for all of us in every aspect of our lives. This has also been true for Rise and our community partners. While many of our services continue, all of Rise's day services programs had to close in mid-March, based on guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

We know this has created challenges for the people we serve and their families, as well as our Rise team members who work in these programs. We want you to know that we have been working tirelessly in close cooperation with DHS and MDH to find a path to reopen services for individuals who choose to return,

People's safety, health, and well-being are our top priority, and we have made every effort to continue to support people in every way our team members are allowed, given the directives from local and state officials. In early June, we received guidance from DHS that we can slowly open our day services locations for people who live in their own or family homes. It will be a very limited re-open that is guided by our Rise COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, which is available on rise.org for anyone who would like to access it. Individuals who live in congregate settings, or who choose not to attend at this time, can be supported remotely using technology to provide day services in their homes.

This issue of the *Reporter* documents some of those efforts and other important stories of people's hope, strength, and perseverance, as well as Rise team members' dedication to our critical mission.

The past few weeks have also been filled with sadness related to the death of George Floyd and the events in our community that have ensued. As a person-centered organization that strives to support all people with dignity and respect, without regard to race, disability, or any individual characteristics, I look forward to relying on these values to ensure we can continue to provide the important services of Rise to the people we are so honored to serve.



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

Kathy Klang
Chair, Rise Board of Directors

Lynn Noren
President & CEO

Noel McCormick
Vice President of Advancement

Beth DePoint
Director of Public Relations; Editor



✧ JOIN US ✧
for

A NIGHT AMONGST THE STARS

9TH ANNUAL CELEBRATE RISE
✧ FUNDRAISING GALA ✧

SAVE THE DATE

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2020

5:00 TO 8:30 PM

MINNEAPOLIS MARRIOTT NORTHWEST
BROOKLYN PARK, MN

**We're going
VIRTUAL!**
TICKETS
DETAILS COMING SOON

SALES BEGIN AUGUST 1
Watch for registration information on our
website www.rise.org

QUESTIONS?

For questions about the gala and/or sponsorship,
please contact **Samantha Marks at Rise**
763.792.2450 // smarks@rise.org

COVID-19 pandemic affects every aspect of life -- including how Rise delivers it's much-needed programs and services

FOR ALL OF US, regardless of where we live or where we work, life has changed significantly since about mid-March when the nation first start realizing how the COVID-19 virus was becoming a monstrous pandemic. It would eventually reach deep and far into every corner of our lives.

It quickly became apparent to Rise President & CEO Lynn Noren and the leadership team that significant changes would need to be made in our service delivery. They quickly went to work adjusting how Rise did business.

“Of course our most important goal has from the start has been to protect the health and safety

of the people we support and our team members,” said Lynn. “Following Gov. Walz’s lead and directives, and working with our business partners, peer agencies, and government agencies such as the Department of Human Services (DHS) and DEED (the Department of Economic and Employment Development), we adjusted how we do business.

“As things changed nearly every day, so did our work plans,” Lynn added. “We quickly got creative technically and some team members began working from home, providing services remotely, and even doing different work than

their job title. It was ‘all hands on deck’ to help figure it out and keep making adjustments to our plans as things progressed.

“It has been challenging, but with Rise team members all giving it their very best efforts, we have continued to provide services to those most in need.”

Following are some pandemic-related stories from over the past few months. (The original posting date is included at the end of each article.) You can find the complete articles, in addition to others, on Rise’s webpage: rise.org/news-headlines and rise.org/success-stories.

Tom Erickson continues his job search with Jennifer’s support



WHEN RISE WAS FORCED to close down most of its direct support services due to the COVID-19 crisis and individuals were told to stay home, Tom Erickson, 55, was having a hard time. He lives alone, his sister recently had had surgery and was unable to visit him, and his county social worker was no longer allowed to make home visits.

Because Tom is DeafBlind and uses tactile American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate, he was very nervous about other people washing their hands. He was also having difficulty finding basic essentials like toilet paper, gloves, sanitizer and Kleenex. So Rise stepped in to make sure Tom had all the supplies he needed.

“We didn’t want Tom to worry during this difficult time so we helped him get these personal protective supplies,” said Jennifer Sawyer, a Rise occupational communication specialist (OCS) with Rise’s Day Training & Habilitation Sensory Support Team. “We wanted to make sure Tom would not be afraid to leave his apartment.”

Even now, the two continue to meet once a week in hopes of finding just the right position for him. On this warm and sunny spring day, Tom and Jennifer met in a park near his home to go over possible job leads.

There is no one in his senior living complex in Spring Lake Park who knows ASL, so Tom enjoys his weekly connection with Jennifer and especially appreciates being able to continue with his job search. (April 8, 2020)



Steven Eull sends his tip money from his job at Hy-Vee to Washington to help with the pandemic

STEVEN EULL IS AN independent, busy, hard-working guy who works three part-time jobs, including as a courtesy clerk at the HyVee store in Oakdale, a product stocker and cleaner the Target in North St. Paul, and a production worker at Rise Stillwater (before it temporarily closed).

When the pandemic first struck, Steven emptied his bank at home of the tips he's made bagging groceries and asked his mom Patsy (shown here with Steven) to mail the \$28 off to Washington, D.C. with a note: "For all the people to help with coronavirus." Since then, news has gotten out about his selfless donation, and Steven has received cards and donations from people all over the country.



He also received a personal shout-out and standing ovation from Vice President Mike Pence who was visiting Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds and business leaders at Hy-Vee's corporate offices in May. Pence's aides had learned of Steven's compassionate generosity from a feature story about him which ran in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. The vice president said he was "so inspired by his example and his love."

When the Minnesota Wild hockey team heard about Steven, they put together 350 masks using Wild logo material to give to Hy-Vee employees in his honor. Ryan Carter and other Wild staff delivered them to his home along with an official jersey for both Steven and his mom.

Kelly Klinke, a Rise employment consultant at Rise Cottage Grove, who supports Steven at his three jobs, said, "Steven is a kind, polite person, and him sharing his savings to help support others in need does not surprise me one bit -- he's such a great guy." (April 14, 2020)

Amanda supports others with mental health issues as Rise supports her during challenging times

HAVING STRUGGLED FOR YEARS with mental health issues herself, Amanda Cummings is now on the front lines assisting people who are especially challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a mental health practitioner at People, Inc. in Coon Rapids, Amanda provides one-on-one and group support, assists people with crisis prevention planning, identifies coping mechanisms, and helps them set attainable goals. Amanda also links people with community resources for housing and employment, as well as connects them with mental health therapists, treatment centers, and county case managers.

While Amanda supports people in a mental health crisis, she herself is supported by Rise's Employment Consultant Ben Streitz who continues to check in regularly with Amanda via phone and text.



Ben has been assisting Amanda with her career goals since she started attending peer support groups at the Bridgeview Drop-In Center - Lee Carlson Center for Mental Health and Well-Being in Fridley. LaNay Koralesky from Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and Bridgeview Therapist Julie Smith also support Amanda.

"Ben helped me look at things positively and make incremental plans toward realistic goals which made it all doable. He has been with me every step of the way and I know he is not going away just because I am doing well. Taking time for self-care is so important as I wouldn't be able to function and support others without first taking care of myself." (April 14, 2020)

Laura appreciates Rise's support in finding a home for her family

LIKE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE around the world, Laura Barnes is having to work through some really hard times now. She had been meeting with Rise's Amy Walcheski, a rapid re-housing placement specialist in Milaca in her home, but now relies on phone conversations to provide critical support services.

A strong, resilient woman who has overcome tremendous obstacles in her life, Laura credits the help and support she has received from Amy for developing good budgeting skills and being able to move into her first very own apartment in October 2019 with her teenage son, Ethan.

"I am forever grateful to have had Amy and Rise help me," Laura said. "Amy has been a real mentor for me. I'm very thankful for Amy teaching me how to budget each month, helping me sign up for rental subsidies, and for everything Rise has done to help me be more independent.

"I can pay my own rent now and do my best to be diligent in my finances. I can make sure my son has a roof over his head, a bed to sleep in, and food to eat. I take that seriously and I am very proud of myself."

Laura has worked as a paraprofessional at Milaca High School for the past two years. "I am a very determined person," she said. "I believe in setting goals, working hard, and pushing through one day at a time."

"Laura is creative, smart, and resilient," said Amy. "She has been through a lot, yet always seems to be a ray of sunshine for others, looking on the bright side of things. I am confident she will succeed." (April 9, 2020)



LeeAnn continues on with plans for a career change



THE MIDDLE OF A PANDEMIC crisis is not an ideal time to be changing career fields, but LeeAnn Hill continues to be optimistic and move forward with her plans to find a new job during these challenging times.

After having worked in the accounting field for more than 30 years, LeeAnn wants to work in an administrative role, preferably for a nonprofit or community service organization whose mission she can relate to.

She was referred to Rise's Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Creating Access program by her therapist at Hennepin County Mental Health Center, Andrea Steele. She started meeting in December 2019 with Rise's Employment Consultant Hollie Petersen for assistance; they were making great progress when the pandemic struck and it all came to a halt.

Her part-time job at a busy grocery store in South Minneapolis was bumped up to 48 hours a week. "Working [her] tail off," LeeAnn splits her time as a cashier, customer service, and front-end manager. Being on the frontline for people who are stressed due to the uncertainties and fears of the COVID-19 outbreak is especially challenging.

Because of her long work hours, LeeAnn and Hollie now keep in touch regularly via email and virtual meetings. Hollie offers support in problem-solving work-related issues and serves as a sounding board.

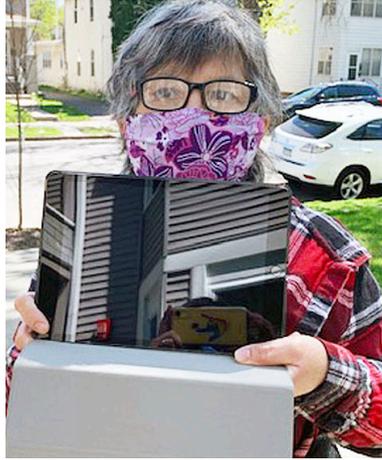
"LeeAnn is determined and resilient, advocates well for herself, and continues to maintain a positive outlook," said Hollie. "I will support her as she faces her challenges head on and moves forward with her goals. I am confident she will have the career she wants someday soon." (April 20, 2020)



iPads give people with hearing issues enhanced communication

WITH FUNDING FROM a Department of Human Services Innovations grant, Rise's Community Supported Employment team was given the green light to use the funds in "creative" ways to serve people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard of hearing. They purchased 16 iPads.

"We have a number of people whom we serve who are isolated and could use this technology," said Occupational Communication Specialist (OCS) Jennifer Sawyer. "The iPads will assist them in maintaining connection with their friends, family, employment consultants, and employers via Facetime using American Sign Language to communicate."



Along with Jennifer, OCSes Angela Mannila and Felicia Herlevi were pleased to give them out to the people they serve. The three said that people were surprised, but thrilled to get them.

"This will make a tremendous difference for people who are already so isolated during this pandemic," said Angela. "We are very grateful for DHS's willingness to think creatively with funding during these extraordinary times."

(May 13, 2020)

Photos: Mee Thao (left) and Nate Banks (above) appreciate their new iPads



Due to increased staffing needs, some furloughed Rise team members work in area group homes

SINCE RISE WAS FORCED to curtail most center-based services at the end of March due to the COVID-19 virus crisis, several furloughed Rise team members responded to the invitation to work during this time at group homes throughout the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota areas. With people at home now 24 hours a day, there has been an extreme shortage of residential support staff.

Darla Olson, a direct support professional at Rise Spring Lake Park, is among those who took on a new job. She said, "People cannot wait to get back to work. Every day is different and everyone is responding to this situation differently. Being with them in their home is so much more personal. I am glad I did this."

Katie Zastrow, a program manager at Rise Anoka, said: "My experience has been positive! The group homes are very appreciative to have the extra help. There are many precautions in place to help keep us all safe."

"The people at the group home have been welcoming, flexible, and grateful for our help," said Paul Widstrom, a Rise Quality Assurance specialist. "Everyone is a bit tired of being cooped up, but are also very understanding of the current situation and why we aren't going out."

"It's been a great way to help our community partners," said Ashley Klingbeil, an employment consultant at Rise Stillwater. "Coming from a community employment team, it is very different work, but not in a negative way, just different. I can tell how much it helps the residential staff." *(April 7, 2020)*





Federal grant enables Alexandra House to contract with Rise to support women who have experienced domestic violence

AS A MOTHER WITH three young children who had experienced domestic violence for several years, Natasha was profoundly grateful for the advocacy and support services she received from Alexandra House to help get her through challenging times.

In addition to their wide-ranging services to victims of domestic, sexual, and relationship abuse, Alexandra House assisted Natasha find suitable housing and pay a portion of her rent through a federal grant from the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW).

Once her housing was secured, Natasha's vital support services were transferred to Rise. Brenda Sorgdrager, a Rise mental health practitioner, offers the women served through this grant a wide range of assistance they may need to stay successfully housed.

Alexandra House contracted with Rise in March 2018 to provide the ongoing support. Natasha is one of three people Brenda currently serves through this federal grant.

"I knew it was going to be really difficult since my mother had died and I would need help navigating through the challenges," remembered Natasha, who also suffers from social anxiety and depression. "When I first met with Brenda, I was so relieved."

Depending on the individual's needs, Brenda offers assistance with budgeting, finding resources

for food, clothing, and childcare, setting up health appointments, finding support groups, dealing with household chores and maintenance, as well as mental health symptoms management.

"Brenda has been a great advocate for me and helped me in so many ways," said Natasha. "I can really talk to her and she understands what I am going through. I struggle with applications and paperwork and she really helps me with those. When I mentioned that I was out of some essentials, without me even asking for assistance, Brenda picked them up and brought them to my house. I was so grateful."

"Natasha is a giving person who really cares about the people in her life – her kids, her family, and her friends," said Brenda. "I am happy to be able to assist her any way I can."

During the pandemic outbreak, the two women had to modify their home visits and keep in touch with phone calls and emails instead.

Natasha has worked as a



Natasha and her children are happy to be in a new home with help and support from Alexandra House and Rise.

PCA (personal care assistant) for more than a dozen years, but after the birth of her third child a few months ago, she opted not to return to work until it was safe.

"I just couldn't take the chance of bringing the COVID-19 virus home to my children," said Na-



*Mental Health Practitioner
Brenda Sorgdrager*



tasha. “I am all they have and if I end up sick, it would be terrible. Thanks to the Alexandra House, they were able to help me cover the costs of rent for a few months -- all thanks to Brenda reaching out to ask if there was any help on my behalf.”

Jeanne also has support services from Rise through this grant. She had been receiving Rise’s ARMHS (Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services) from Brenda since August 2016, but transferred to the grant program because of the flexibility of services it offered.

Brenda works with Jeanne on managing her mental health symptoms, connecting with community resources, and living successfully with her young daughter in a new place.

After not having worked in about ten years due to her anxiety, Jeanne was excited when the instructors at the ECFE (Early Childhood and Family Education) courses she was taking recognized how good Jeanne was with children and asked her to assist three days a week with the *Adventures in Parenting* class.

“I really enjoyed that,” said Jeanne who hopes to go back in the fall when the courses resume following the COVID-19 pandemic. “It was a really good experience and helped me feel good about myself that I could help others.”

“Through it all, Brenda has been a tremendous help to me,” Jeanne added. “I don’t have a good support system in my personal life. I can’t imagine how I would do this without Rise and Brenda’s support

– it would be a real struggle.”

“Jeanne is really doing well now,” Brenda noted. “She never thought she would work again and takes so much pride, rightly so, in her job. With this grant, she was able to sign a lease for subsidized housing and won’t have to worry about providing shelter for her and her daughter. Jeanne is a very insightful, kind woman who wears her heart on her sleeve. I think the sky’s the limit for her and her daughter.”

“The partnership between Alexandra House and Rise has proven to be an essential partnership,” said Housing and Supportive Services Director Jenny Green.

“Alexandra House specializes in working with victims of violence and Rise’s expertise lies in working with a person’s mental health. By providing a more holistic approach to services, the options are endless for what each person can learn and



Jeanne and her daughter

accomplish.”

With locations in Blaine and Anoka, Alexandra House’s services are free-of-charge. It offers 24-hour emergency shelter services to victims of domestic, sexual, and relationship violence across the state of Minnesota, plus legal advocacy, support groups, housing and supportive services, youth intervention and prevention services, elder abuse services, community education, and professional training.

Rise Board of Directors welcomes Anne Holoch

Anne Holoch, a senior human resource manager for nVent, was elected to serve on Rise’s Board of Directors in March.

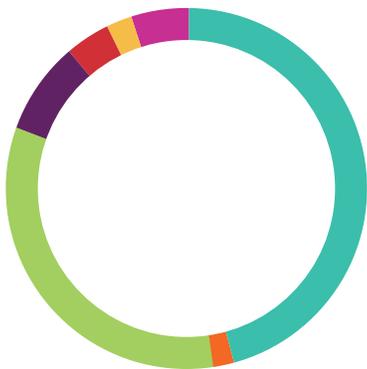
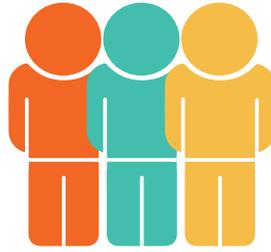
“nVent has a large Rise work team in Anoka and I’ve been so impressed with the dedication and work ethic of the Rise staff members and wanted to support the agency more. I am excited to get further involved in helping Rise navigate through these interesting times and am willing to jump in any way necessary.”

Anne and her husband lives in Corcoran with their two young children. A native of Nebraska, Anne is a big Cornhusker’s fan and also enjoys baking, crafting, and attending concerts.

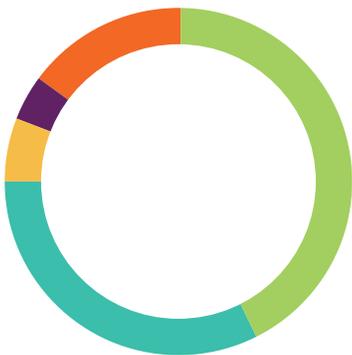


2019 ANNUAL REPORT

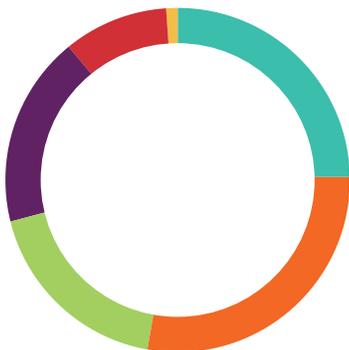
3,487
PEOPLE SERVED
BY RISE IN 2019



- Developmental/Intellectual - 46%
- Learning - 2%
- Mental Health - 33%
- Sensory (Deaf, Blind, Hard of Hearing) - 8%
- Brain Injury - 4%
- Physical - 2%
- Other - 5%



- Day Training & Habilitation - 1,505
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Supported Employment - 1,126
- Housing & Independent Living - 207
- Adult Day - 144
- Welfare to Work - 505



- 18-29 - 25%
- 30-39 - 28%
- 40-49 - 18%
- 50-59 - 18%
- 60-69 - 10%
- 70+ - 1%

EMPLOYMENT

The information below reflects employment outcomes for people served in our Day Training and Habilitation (DTH), Vocational Rehabilitation/Supported Employment (VRSE) and Welfare-to-Work (W2W) service lines.



714

NEW COMPETITIVE JOBS IN 2019



366

VRSE JOB PLACEMENTS

137

W2W JOB PLACEMENTS

211

DTH JOB PLACEMENTS

39 people transitioned from center-based or community (contracted) employment to competitive placements in 2019.

39

SATISFACTION

The information below is reflective of our survey responses of 838 people served, 189 stakeholders and 23 business partners.

95%

positive response
for people served

97%

positive response
for stakeholders

98%

positive response
for business partners

“ I'm so grateful for this skilled & compassionate help. I've been working at the same company for more than 2 years now! I feel more confident now... ” - From a person served

“ The entire Rise team is fantastic, professional and an amazing asset to our business. We loved meeting the whole team and the people that work on our project. I have recommended Rise to several other manufacturers as well! ” - From a business partner

ENRICHMENT

Rise recognizes the importance of personal growth in all aspects of life. We offer life enrichment activities such as volunteer projects, art therapy, and community activities to support persons served in meeting these goals.

83%

ENHANCED THEIR
COMMUNICATION
SKILLS

80%

IMPROVED THEIR
PERSONAL HEALTH
AND WELLNESS

73%

HAD COMMUNITY
ACCESS

82%

INCREASED THEIR
INDEPENDENCE

Rise's Mission ~
Rise unlocks potential and opens doors to success for people with disabilities or other challenges through creative solutions and customized support.



STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM

LYNN NOREN
President and Chief Executive Officer

TIM DICKIE
Chief Program Officer

TOM HAGLUND
Chief Financial Officer

ERIN BRAATEN
Vice President of Human Resources

NOEL MCCORMICK
Vice President of Advancement

JUDY ANDERSEN
Director of Adult Day Programs

JODI BLUME
Senior Director of Community Integration & Life Enrichment Programs

MIKE HARPER
Director of Programs and Services - Central Minnesota

KEITH HOVLAND
Director of CBTE & Supported Employment Teams

MICHELE MORRIS
Director of Industrial Services

RYAN NELSON
Director of Transportation

KRIS OBERG
Director of Employment & Day Services - Washington County

ROBERT REEDY
Senior Director of Vocational Services - Metro Area

BECKY ROTHER
Director of Quality Assurance

JAMIE SMITH
Director of Information Technology

NATALIE ZACHARIAS
Director of DTH & Supported Employment Services

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Lauri Hopkins, Lino Lakes

Susan Langfeldt, Deer Park, Wis.

Sheila Minske, Minneapolis

Kelly Steffens, Prior Lake

INCOME STATEMENT

INCOME

PROGRAM AND SERVICE FEES.....	\$16,750,000
PRODUCTION AND LABOR SALES TO PUBLIC.....	\$7,618,000
GRANTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS.....	\$4,005,000
TRANSPORTATION.....	\$3,951,000
DONATIONS / SPECIAL EVENTS / UNITED WAY.....	\$288,000
OTHER.....	\$1,557,000
TOTAL INCOME.....	\$34,169,000

EXPENSES

DAY TRAINING AND HABILITATION PROGRAMS.....	\$16,073,000
VOCATIONAL AND REHABILITATION AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS.....	\$3,641,000
PRODUCTION.....	\$4,059,000
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL.....	\$3,286,000
TRANSPORTATION.....	\$3,169,000
ADULT DAY PROGRAMS.....	\$1,288,000
WELFARE -TO -WORK PROGRAMS.....	\$424,000
HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS.....	\$627,000
FUNDRAISING.....	\$251,000
TOTAL.....	\$32,818,000

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS.....	\$15,166,000
LAND, BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT.....	\$18,905,000
LESS DEPRECIATION.....	\$9,897,000
NET LAND, BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT.....	\$9,008,000
OTHER ASSETS.....	\$720,000
TOTAL ASSETS.....	\$24,894,000

LIABILITIES

CURRENT LIABILITIES.....	\$2,724,000
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES.....	\$1,315,000
OTHER LIABILITIES.....	\$418,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES.....	\$4,457,000

NET ASSETS

NET ASSETS, UNRESTRICTED.....	\$19,982,000
NET ASSETS, RESTRICTED.....	\$455,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS.....	\$20,437,000



Rise earns high marks in CARF accreditation survey

BASED ON AN extensive three-day survey conducted by four CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) surveyors, Rise was recently awarded its twelfth three-year certification, the highest level of accreditation.

Surveyors thoroughly examined and evaluated all aspects of the agency, assessing more than 1,200 program service standards.

Those included Rise's management system, employment programs and services, production procedures, funding sources, and administrative organization to assess its compliance with CARF's international standards of performance.

The CARF surveyors also interviewed Rise board members, team members, parents and guardians, people we serve, employers, volunteers, and business associates regarding Rise's services.

In their 26-page final report, surveyors concluded, in part, that Rise: "demonstrates a commitment to person-centered thinking and implementation. Its employment services are creative and individualized, resulting in satisfaction on the part of persons served and employers. Rise has forged relationships and partnerships throughout the communities it serves and advocates on behalf of persons with disabilities.

"Persons served, family members, and funders all expressed a high level of satisfaction and praise for the staff providing the services. Its reputation as a model of services in the state is well-deserved.

"The leadership and staff of Rise are congratulated for their level of commitment to the organization's mission and extraordinary conformance to CARF standards."

Surveyors also complimented



Rise for its governance policies, strategic planning, code of ethical conduct, and ability to manage funds and maintain a stable financial position.

"CARF accreditation gives the people we serve confidence that an independent monitoring system is in place which is specifically concerned about their best interests," said Rise President Lynn Noren.

"The community can be assured of Rise's accountability and high-level performance," she added. "We are proud of the services we offer and congratulate our hard-working team members for their efforts in carrying out Rise's important mission so professionally and effectively."

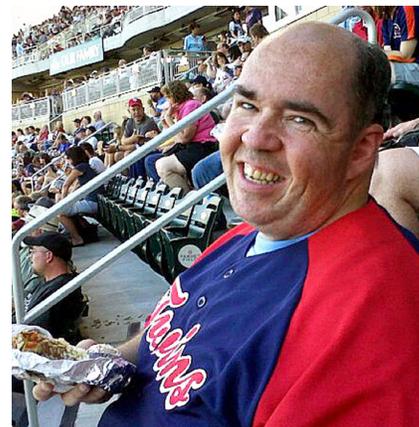
Jody remembered as a great guy with a big heart

RISE TEAM MEMBERS and co-workers were saddened by Jody's recent death.

Jody had been receiving Day Training and Habilitation services from Rise since 2003 and worked at many job sites in the community.

An outgoing, chatty, hard-working guy, everyone loved being around Jody. His co-workers remember him as a "teammate who always had a great winning attitude." Friend Mike Jacobson says, "Jody was a person with a big heart. One of the nicest guys I ever knew."

Jody loved to cook and share stories of his many travel and cruise adventures. He was a big Vikings fan and cheered on the Twins at Target Field. Jody participated in Special Olympics, bowling and playing basketball, and enjoyed dancing at Rise parties and Our Dance Place. He also had fun singing in Rise's *Celebrate Talent* shows! Jody will be sadly missed by friends, family, and co-workers.



Rise partners with SSA and Westat to study benefits of how additional supports can lead to employment success

DESPITE HAVING DEALT with numerous significant health issues since being diagnosed with severe hearing loss at age three, Madonna Wagner was motivated to work instead of applying for Social Security Disability benefits.

A medical assistant who worked primarily in pediatric and geriatric clinics for most of her career, the last few years have been especially challenging. Madonna has confronted with one debilitating condition after another, including hearing loss, osteoarthritis, migraines, and joint replacements.

Separately, she says her health issues wouldn't necessarily keep her from working, but together, they are overwhelming. And when she started having seizures, working as a medical assistant was no longer possible.

In her early 40s, Madonna decided to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, and was surprised to be turned down. Soon after, she was contacted to be part of a special project for people who were denied SSI benefits, but may be still interested in working.

Madonna was referred to Rise for services in July 2018 and is one of 90 people enrolled in Rise's three-year Supported Employment Demonstration (SED) project. Started in December 2017, the project is funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and is



Madonna Wagner appreciates the expanded services available through the SED grant project.

administered by Westat in Rockville, Md.

The project provides Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services from an employment consultant with additional support from a nurse care coordinator (NCC), and care managers, plus funds for a variety of resources. The goal is to see how providing these comprehensive and coordinated services impacts people's need for SSI.

Rise is one of thirty study sites in the United States, and the only one in Minnesota, participating in the SED project.

Given it is a research project, those enrolled have been placed into three different study groups, with each group receiving a different level and range of support services. Each person served is entitled to three years of supports.

Rise's SED team consists of:

- * A nurse care coordinator (NCC) who assists people with their mental health care and primary care needs. Rise partnered

with the Hennepin County Mental Health Center (HCMHC) to have diagnostic assessments done on everyone receiving services from the NCC.

- * Three care managers who help connect people with primary care and mental health care, county benefits, housing supports and other community resources that might stabilize them enough to pursue and focus on employment.

- * Three employment consultants who provide career planning, job placement, and employment supports.

Even with her numerous health challenges, Madonna's spirit and determination have not diminished as she pursues a new career path. "I love to get my hands on something and learn new things," she said.

SED Program Supervisor Nancee Magistad is currently providing Madonna with employment services during the pandemic.

Together, via Microsoft Teams, texts, and email, the two are working on career planning, job development, resume and cover letter writing, and other employment support services customized to help re-ignite Madonna's career. She receives care management services from Rise's Sarah Crampton.



“It was hard to leave my medical assistance work,” said Madonna. “My grandparents, who raised me, were so proud when I graduated from Anoka Technical College, and gave me a customized stethoscope to fit over my hearing aids.

“My career planning has been tricky -- my multiple health issues get in the way of different jobs. I’d



like to find a job as a receptionist or admin support person.”

Her seasonal job as a receptionist in a tax firm ended in early May at the end of tax preparation season.

Madonna and her husband Troy live in Fridley and have three grown children. They enjoy playing board games, watching movies from their extensive DVD collection, and spoiling their two dogs.

“The SSA funds available for this project have been generous as they realize that when people have their basic needs met, they’re better equipped to find and maintain work,” said Nancee.

“People have received funds for a wide range of support needs, including housing applications and rent, car repairs, temporary hotel

stays during emergency situations, food resources, bus and gas cards, occupational training, and work clothing and shoes.”

“Rise has a track record providing IPS services and we have been involved in other SSA research studies through Westat,” said Program Manager Anne Mornes. “We are excited to be part of this important research project which will have an extensive impact on how SSA services are provided to maximize people’s potential.”

“Everyone at Rise, especially Nancee and Sarah, have been so amazing and I really appreciate their help and support,” said Madonna. “Someone from Rise once told me, ‘Don’t say I can’t; say, how can I do it differently?’ That should be Rise’s motto!”

Rise remembers Kari Wagner for her spirit, talent, and grace

RISE TEAM MEMBERS and her co-workers were deeply saddened by the recent death of Kari Wagner, who worked as a data entry clerk at Rise Crystal. She passed away May 13 at the age of 44, and will be sadly missed.

Kari was a gracious woman who had a deep and abiding faith, worked hard, loved her friends and family, and was the treasured daughter of Gary and Nancy Wagner. The family was featured in a video production for the 2018 *Celebrate Rise Gala*: <https://tinyurl.com/yakuwnb2>

While Kari’s cerebral palsy may have prevented her from speaking, she did not have any difficulty expressing herself – especially through her exquisite artwork. From the moment an art therapist strapped a paintbrush onto Kari’s forehead, she was excited to find her voice and demonstrate her talents through art, primarily acrylics and watercolor paintings.

Over the years, Kari has exhibited her work in various art shows and other public venues. She set up an online site to sell her work to help fund the *Expressions of Faith Fund* which supports art therapy and other cultural programs to assist people who have disabilities express themselves. You can learn more about her work at: kariwagner-artwork.com/store.



Many of Kari’s beautiful paintings were inspired by travels with her parents, Gary and Nancy. She also enjoyed painting fields of flowers and young children enjoying nature.

Interns learn a lot, but contribute even more to a wide range of important Rise programs and projects

RISE IS WELL-AWARE of just how valuable having interns serve in the organization can be – our own president and CEO, Lynn Noren, started with Rise in 1979 as a college intern. “And I just never left!” she laughs.

Rise was privileged to have six outstanding people so far this year.

Abigail (Abbey) Butzine

Abbey served as an intern with Rise’s Marketing and Development Departments and plans to graduate from the University of Minnesota in May 2021 with a bachelor’s degree in retail merchandising and a minor in management and product design.

“With this internship, I felt I was able to contribute my skills and knowledge toward a cause that is meaningful to me. I also gained perspective from my coworkers and the other Rise interns and enjoyed working as a team. I learned a lot from everyone.”

Abbey worked on a wide range of research, graphic design, and communication projects. One of

Abbey Butzine



her major tasks was helping create the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala* sponsorship printed materials; she also designed Rise’s annual button which President Lynn Noren hands out on her visits to all Rise team members and the people we serve.

“My Rise internship not only gave me lots of professional connections, guidance, and advice, but I have greatly improved my social media marketing, brand development and management, and graphic design skills.”

Kari Hovey

Kari took a break from her job as a speech therapist in the public schools to explore different settings and interned with Rise in assistive technology. She worked with people served at Rise Crystal who have intellectual and physical disabilities.

Having earned her master’s in speech language pathology in 2002 from the University of Minnesota, Kari said she found just what she was looking for at Rise.

“In addition to brainstorming with Rise team members about creative ways to make adaptations and improve accessibility, I helped develop a permanent place for virtual reality to support job training and wellness,” said Kari. “I also facilitated a weekly adaptive communication conversation group.”

“I have learned a lot about the challenges that adults with a variety of physical and communica-



Kari Hovey led an adaptive communication conversation group.

tion abilities face,” Kari added. “I will return to my work as a speech therapist in the schools with a better understanding of assistive technology. This has been an AMAZING experience.”

Taylor Klenner

A May 2020 graduate of St. Catherine University in St. Paul in public health policy, Taylor interned in administration at Rise Spring Lake.

“Rise’s mission and focus on improving people’s lives really spoke to me,” she said. “I have learned a lot about nonprofit orga-



Taylor Klenner



nizations from people who really care about their work. Rise team members were very supportive and motivating; they made me feel valued and respected. I feel I have become savvier with my professional skills and made wonderful connections. I am very grateful for everyone’s support.”

Taylor accepted a public health position in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and plans to live there for the next year or so and perhaps return to school to earn a master’s degree in public health or business administration.

Lauren Klemstein

Lauren is studying political science at the University of Minnesota and was Rise’s governmental affairs intern earlier this year. She was instrumental in gathering information for legislative updates that Rise sent out to our supporters as well as helped organize a letter-writing campaign and make signs for the annual Day at the Capitol event.

Emma Metzger-Lane

Emma served as an intern at Rise Coon Rapids in program development. She graduated in May from the University of Wisconsin-Stout with a degree in human development and family studies. She plans to pursue a master’s degree in the same areas.

Emma had been working with seniors for a number of years and wanted to expand her experiences.

“My sister has a disability and I also wanted to better understand the various opportunities and resources Minnesota offered,” said



Emma Metzger-Lane

Emma. “Doing an internship with Rise seemed like a great way to do that.”

Emma worked creating program “maps” with people through Rise’s STEP (Supports Toward Employment Program). These are used to explore alternative work and enrichment activities so as to develop, maintain, and enhance people’s skills as they take steps toward competitive employment.

“Learning about Rise’s Person-Centered Thinking also enabled me to better understand my relationship with my sister,” Emma added. “I really appreciate all the work that Rise puts into every single person served and their efforts to make sure each one can have great opportunities and be

successful in life.

“Everyone works well together and bounces idea around; it’s a real team effort.”

LeeAnna White

LeeAnna graduated from Michigan State University in May with a bachelor’s degree in media and information.

She worked on a number of important projects, including writing articles for the *Rise Reporter* and Rise’s website; designing the 2019 Annual Report, a banner for the Day at the Capitol event, and infographics for Rise programs, and marketing materials for special events. LeeAnna also developed some internal trainings for Rise team members and updated website content.

“Team members throughout the organization have helped me in more ways that I could count!” she said. “They’ve shared kind words of support, given me great feedback for improvement, and shared their vast knowledge. I hope to find an organization like Rise where I can continue to make a positive impact on someone’s life.”

For more information about Rise internships, visit our website at rise.org/internship-opportunities.



LeeAnna White interviewed Mike Steffen for a Rise Reporter article.

Ruth Howard brings her outgoing personality, great organizational skills to her volunteer work at Rise

By LeeAnna White,

Advancement Team intern

WHEN RUTH HOWARD learned about Rise's important mission through her sister, it piqued her interest in volunteering there. With her vibrant personality, Ruth has been an invaluable volunteer supporting Human Resources and Administrative team members at Rise Spring Lake Park.

Ruth always has been a person who enjoys staying busy, especially now that she has retired from a career as an accountant controller.

"And I've always loved volunteering," she said. "I was often involved with my kids' schools when they were younger."

This past October, Ruth met with Rise's Volunteer & Recruitment Coordinator Shannon Widstrom to see what kind of work best suited her interests. Shannon



quickly realized that Ruth's organizational skills and outgoing personality would be a great fit.

"Ruth has a warm personality and been a great addition to our Rise team," said Shannon. "Her skill set aligns perfectly with what the HR team was looking for, and she is always willing to tackle any

project we toss her way, from filing to creating fun party decorations for our programs.

Ruth said she really feels like a part of the team and enjoys coming in every Tuesday and Thursday for four hours to help with administrative tasks.

"I've always believed in teamwork and treating everyone the same," she said. "Everyone is a valuable member of the team, from the dishwasher to the CEO."

Ruth delights in spending time with her grandchildren, cooking, and learning from history documentaries.

If you'd like to find out more about current volunteer opportunities and how you might get involved, please go to our volunteer page or contact Volunteer and Recruitment Coordinator Shannon Widstrom at: swidstrom@rise.org.

Thank you!



#GiveAtHomeMN May 1-8

Your support of Rise has enabled people to engage in the community, find jobs, and earn an income for the past 49 years. Right now, many of us are feeling isolated and uneasy due to the pandemic, and people with disabilities are no different. We are all hoping for life to get back to normal, and without essential services like Rise, people with disabilities will not have the support they need to get back to their normal lives again.

Rise recently participated in GiveMN's #GiveAtHomeMN Campaign and you responded! With your love and support, we raised a grand total of

\$13,680

Thank you so much for seeing Rise through these challenging times!

Missed out on the fun? Online giving is always open at

rise.org/give



Mike enjoys camaraderie of great co-workers and guests at both the Lift Bridge Brewery and the YMCA Stillwater

By Advancement Intern
LeeAnna White

ON A TYPICAL Wednesday, Mike Steffen would be hard at work making sure the Lift Bridge Brewery in Stillwater is ready for its usual influx of thirsty guests coming in to enjoy their wide range of craft beer offerings.

But as we all well know, life at work, at home, and in our social life has changed quite a bit for an indefinite period.

One thing hasn't changed, though, is Mike's commitment to making sure he does a great job which Co-Owners Brad Glynn and Dan Schwarz appreciate.

A kind man and hardworking employee, Mike enjoys being able to help keep the place clean and spotless for both the employees and their taproom guests for when they come in to enjoy a good time.

After graduating from Stillwater High School in 2006, Mike started his journey with Rise in June 2009.

With career planning and job development assistance from Employment Consultant Patty Thurk, Mike started working part time at Lift Bridge Brewery in September 2011.

"Mike's pride for his work here is infectious," said Brad. "Everyone at Lift Bridge appreciates having Mike as a co-worker and a friend. He is a hard worker, but

also, we enjoy talking sports over lunch with him!"

During Mike's eight and a half years working at the brewery, he's made many friends including a best friend whose name is also Mike. (*What are the odds?!*) He loves getting to know his co-workers and going to lunch with them, especially at one of his favorite spots, Taco Johns. In fact, having friendly, supportive co-workers, and great people to work with is one of his main reasons Mike enjoys both his jobs.

In addition to his work at Lift Bridge, two days a week, Mike works at YMCA in Stillwater, where he holds a similar janitorial position.

Employment Consultant Denise Gibson continues to provide follow-up support services to Mike to help ensure he stays successful at both jobs. Mike talks with her once or twice a week to address any work-related issues he may have at either of his jobs.

"Denise's support is very helpful to me" said Mike. "I like that I can always talk to her."

"Mike is very polite and such



a pleasure to work with," said Denise. "It is fun to hear him promote all the different beers and talk about what foods they go best with. During our visits, he always encourages me to stop back in after work to pick up a growler to go!"

When Mike isn't working, he enjoys spending time with his sister who recently moved three houses down from him. He helps her out by mowing the lawn or with any other tasks she might need done around the house. For fun, Mike likes going to the movies, bowling, and playing basketball.



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Cutlines from front cover photos (from top left to bottom right):

1. Direct Support Professional Melissa Pavek (right) and the team at Activar in Bloomington are busy. It's a fast-paced work environment and they work on metal wall cabinets that are found in businesses around the world.
2. Steven Eull donated his grocery bagging tips from HyVee to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Chris Dittmer and his team at Ruan in Otsego are happy and proud to be working during these challenging times. They clean storage and packing totes used by trucking companies.
4. Casey Strack (left), who typically works as a Quality Assurance specialist, and Direct Support Professional Tom Kreiner helped fill in for production workers who weren't able to come in at nVent in Anoka.
5. Nate Banks was one of 16 people who is Deaf to receive an iPad with special funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to help him better communicate with family, friends, and his support team.
6. Occupational Communication Specialist Angela Mannila sewed some masks for the people she serves who are Deaf and hard of hearing, including some with a clear panel to make lip-reading easier.

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