

50 RISE YEARS REPORTER

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Photo: Brian Tanning

COVER STORY

CELEBRATE RISE GALA - Lori Mayo, a 2021 Rise'ing Star, poses with a friend before accepting her award during our annual Gala, held in Brooklyn Park, Minn. November 4, 2021.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



We have officially welcomed a new year! I am thankful for so much, and especially appreciate the resilience and commitment of our team members who work hard to support the people we serve at Rise. Because of them we can continue fulfilling our mission each day to support people as they live with purpose and pride.

Many people are waiting to return to services while others are being newly referred, and we are keenly aware of the importance of having a qualified team of professionals ready to support them. All of us at Rise are working together to address the workforce challenges in new and creative ways. Please join us by referring people from your networks to Rise. We'd love to meet them!

This issue of the Rise Reporter highlights our recent Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala. It was a fabulous event, celebrating our 50th anniversary and highlighting the accomplishments of people we serve, staff team members, business partnerships, and recognizing legislative leaders for their support of the organization. I hope you enjoy their stories.

Lynn Noren
Rise President & CEO

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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SUBMISSIONS

We love a good story. Share your photos and accomplishments with us! Your submission to kbartnick@rise.org may appear in an upcoming Rise Reporter, be featured on Rise's social media sites or both! We can't wait to hear from you!

STAFF

Kathy Klang

Chair, Rise Board of Directors

Lynn Noren

President & CEO

Noel McCormick

Vice President of Advancement

Kelly Bartnick

Communications and Volunteer Manager; Editor



NEW LOOK IN THE NEW YEAR

RISE COON RAPIDS WILL DEBUT REMODELED LOCATION AND EXPAND SERVICES THIS YEAR

WORK ON A long-planned construction project is nearing completion at Rise Coon Rapids where the area that housed a former production floor has transformed to a new life enrichment services space as Coon Rapids' focus shifts from production to life enrichment.

The 6,000 sq. ft. remodel designed by HGA Architects will allow for expanded employment exploration and new services assisting people as they build life skills, including transition planning and safety skill building. The large gathering hub space is flanked by separate rooms that will feature health and wellness programming, computers and technology spaces, and room for art projects.

Rise Coon Rapids team members are also working on new activities with pilot groups ahead of the planned opening. Coon Rapids is also hiring more staff to ensure those on a waiting list can come back when the building opens later this spring.

We thank Anoka County for helping make the remodel possible through a Community Development Block Grant and also HGA Architects for donating their time during the architectural planning process. ▼



Former production space in September 2021.



Renovations in progress during October 2021.



New lounge/gathering space with programming rooms nearing completion in December 2021.

Photos: Natalie Zacharias

ON THE MENU

Rise supports two workers at Woodbury Culver's restaurant

FRIENDLY FACES OF Wes Dahle and Mark Riggins greet customers hungry for French fries and frozen custard at Culver's in Woodbury. The two have worked at the restaurant long enough to be recognized by the regulars. Riggins started during the location's 2016 grand opening and Dahle joined him a year later.

"When I started my main thing was running orders. Now my main thing is bussing tables and running orders is optional," Riggins said.

Riggins enjoys his job, which is why he says he keeps returning. His near photographic memory and strong work ethic are celebrated by managers who depend on him for a variety of tasks. "Mark is thorough. He does an amazing job cleaning," said Rise Oakdale Program Coordinator Karen Lindblom who works with both Riggins and Dahle. "Mark came back when Culver's opened the drive-through after the pandemic closure. He started one to two days a week deep cleaning and excelled."



Wes Dahle (pictured left) and Mark Riggins (pictured right) take a break out of their work day at Culver's in Woodbury.

Dahle was also sidelined by the pandemic and stayed home for several months. He has been back on the job running food orders for about a year now. Because he was such a valued employee, Culver's held his job open for 16 months until he happily returned.

"My coworkers are my friends. They're long-term friends. I've always enjoyed the support and

encouragement we have for each other," he said. "I like coming here and seeing everyone. When I come in there's always a huge hug [from the kitchen workers] every time." He considers his teammates friends and is happy to be back at work once again.

The Woodbury Culver's was named a 2021 Rise Employer of the Year at our annual fundraising gala last fall. A full list of the award-winners can be found in this issue beginning on page 10.

WE ARE HIRING!
Apply today at rise.org/jobs

GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Rise team in Rogers makes medicine happen.

THE NEXT TIME you pop in for an annual health screening or even schedule a surgery, think of a team of five Rise workers at a warehouse in Rogers, Minn. who make that visit possible.

For more than a year, the team has worked at Medline, a medical supply manufacturer and distributor that supplies the nation's health care facilities with a wide array of supplies. It's an essential job during an ongoing pandemic that has put public health front and center across the country.

"We're behind the front line," said Paul Gaffaney, director of operations at Medline. "Without us there's nothing a nurse or doctor can do without the supply. And the Rise group are part of that service we provide to the community."

Rise teamed up with Medline in the middle of the pandemic. Gaffaney said our representatives were receptive to the company's needs, creating a new supported employment team tailored to Medline's goals. And most importantly the group was able to take on the job quickly. "Since then, we haven't looked back. It's been a great relationship," he said.

Five team members and their support professional, Melissa Pavsek, have two crucial warehouse roles—they build boxes items will be shipped in, and clean shipping bins earmarked for hospitals.



Rise's Medline team pictured with Paul Gaffaney, director of operations at the Rogers, Minn. facility.

In total, they build and clean thousands of boxes and bins daily.

"Melissa and the team do an awesome job taking care of it," Gaffaney said. "We never have a shortage of totes or boxes. It's just taken care of because the team knows."

Chris Krause is one of the team members responsible for making sure the work gets done. He has worked at other production facilities and says he's found the perfect prescription for success at Medline. "I like working here," Krause said. "It's a clean place to work. I

want to work here."

The warehouse ships more than 8,000 orders per day. Gaffaney says the Rise team's work is essential to the operation's success. And he believes their presence in the Medline workforce has benefits too.

"It's always good to have them come in with smiles on their faces and see they are excited to work. There's a high sense of accomplishment of the work the Rise team is doing." ▼

EXCELLENT LEADERS

THREE TEAM MEMBERS WERE RECENTLY RECOGNIZED WITH EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARDS RECOGNIZING THEIR OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS.



KATIE BENNIE,
PROGRAM MANAGER »

Katie Bennie uses positivity and reassurance to coach team members, encouraging them to reach outside their comfort zones.

Relationships at Rise and beyond are important to Katie, and her willingness to build bridges allows Katie to tackle challenging situations collaboratively with her teams. She believes everyone has the capacity for career growth and supports them through the process.

Her creativity has contributed to great success throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as she and her team explored technology to

create remote services activities. They also connected with persons served to learn about people's interests.

Bennie created an "on-call" list for those unable to return to services due to staffing shortages. When a person served cannot attend remote services, she turns to the on-call list, offering the opportunity to someone who can attend.

Whether it's billing, licensing, policies or technology, as a Rise leader, Katie embraces the challenges Rise faces each day with a positive outlook. ▼



MICHELE MORRIS
DIR. OF INDUSTRIAL SERVICES»

Michele Morris is the embodiment of a person-centered leader. She creates a team atmosphere by

focusing on the skills and abilities of those she serves. This allows people to confidently own their tasks and take satisfaction in their accomplishments.

She also works hard to build an inclusive environment by seeking input on processes and procedures. She inspires production teams to do high quality work, which contributes to high rates of customer satisfaction.

Morris is always striving to work smart and has a knack for understanding the big picture when creating work site plans. A genuinely compassionate leader, she prioritizes people Rise serves and works hard to support them. ▼





ROSS WANGSTEEN
PROGRAM MANAGER »

Ross Wangsteen's ability to recognize people's strengths has allowed him to build a top-notch team that values encouragement, communication and positive working relationships.

Having recently been an employment consultant, he has strong foundational knowledge of his teams, which allows him coach team members and connect well with community and business partners, case managers, counselors and social workers.

His knowledge has been an asset during training and development efforts. And his willingness to take on projects has allowed for new training and tracking tools contributing to more organized tracking and documentation systems.

Wangsteen leads by example. He puts people at ease and listens to their concerns. He is polite, clear, consistent and collaborative. He answers every call, every text and email. ▼



RISE RECEIVES GENEROUS THANKSGIVING DONATIONS »

We gave thanks in 2021 to our generous partners from Cummins and Ruan / Bobcat (left). Their annual donation drive provided hot Thanksgiving meals for more than 170 families we serve. We are grateful for their support each year. ▼

ART SPEAKS CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAY SEASON »

Rise artists have kept busy throughout the fall working on new and exciting projects, like this holiday art (pictured opposite page) by Matt Wilson at Rise Crystal.

According to Rise art therapist Stacy Gross, the creative process contributes to reduced anxiety and increased relaxation, allowing artists to find their voices in new and exciting ways. ▼



Denise Coppess in the customer service area of the Blaine, Minn. Home Depot store.

FEELING AT HOME

Denise Coppess' new job lays the foundation for a career change

The friendly face welcoming customers at Home Depot near Blaine's Northtown Mall is a familiar one to many at Rise. Denise Coppess greets shoppers there 3 to 4 days per week with a smile on her face, sharing helpful information and pointing people looking for specific items in the right direction.

Coppess has worked with Rise for about 25 years. Much of her career experience has been office-based through employment supports and our Data Ability team, which supports Rise teams and business partners.

Coppess was on a path that would keep her behind a desk in

an independent office job. But last summer she made change when she joined Home Depot's customer service department. "Did I ever think I'd be in customer service? No. But I like it," Coppess said.

"You can't always just sit around. You're not going to feel satisfied or get money in any way."

A NEW PATH

Taking this new position was a risk because it was a huge change from the data entry and office work she'd been doing for more than two decades. A new career

path meant developing an entirely new skillset while also relying on the communication lessons she'd previously learned.

"It's fabulous. She's always got such a great positive attitude and is wonderful to be around. And the customers really like her," said Denise's manager, Cathy Shoemaker.

Coppess worked at an interpreting service before joining Home Depot. That position ended in job cuts related to the pandemic. After being out of work for nearly a year she briefly went back to work at Rise before her employment consultant, Sarah Gustafson, suggested she give retail a try.



“[Sarah] said, ‘I have a position I’m working on. Do you want to go look at it?’ I said, ‘Okay!’” Coppess said.

GRANT-FUNDED INITIATIVE

Gustafson’s work making new partnership connections is amplified by a financial grant from Rise supporter and partner, Cummins.

The program’s goal is to economically empower people with disabilities by connecting them with employers paying competitive wages. With this support, people can set long-term goals to work in fields they are passionate about. They also become independently connected to the communities they live in, which results in increased purpose and life satisfaction.

Gustafson’s work resulted in 12 new jobs in 2021.



Rise Employer Outreach Specialist
Sarah Gustafson

LOOKING FORWARD

Denise enjoys working with customers. She plans to improve her skills and grow her role more during the upcoming year.

She recently participated in a workforce goal-setting survey where she suggested taking on even more customer-focused tasks like answering phones and cashiering.

Her advice to anyone thinking about changing careers or starting their very first job? Do it! “You can’t always just sit around. You’re not going to feel satisfied or get money in any way,” she said. ▼

We work hard to expand business partnerships and create new employment opportunities.

Interested? Contact:

Sarah Gustafson
Employer Outreach Specialist,
Cummins Grant Program

(612) 413-1092
sgustafson@rise.org



Coppess (right) is assisted by a new power chair, which raises up and down. The movement allows her to greet customers on their level.





Photo: Brian Tanning

50 YEARS

CELEBRATE RISE GALA RECAP

\$160,000 RAISED DURING OUR 2021 GALA WILL DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

More than 250 people gathered in November 2021 for our Celebrate Rise Gala commemorating our 50th Anniversary. This year's event raised more than \$160,000, with a portion of the proceeds going directly to people we support through the advancing lives fund.

The advancing lives fund supports people with financial gifts of \$75 to \$500 to meet needs that are not covered by other funding sources. Past gifts have included:

- **Home wheelchair ramp**
- **Assistive communication equipment**
- **Car repairs and insurance**
- **Computer and Internet access**
- **Eye exams and new glasses**
- **Work and appointment bus passes**
- **Work uniforms and shoes**
- **Professional and certification fees**
- **College textbooks**
- **Tools and equipment to use at technical schools / training programs**
- **Tai Chi classes for mental health**



Check out our Gala photo album!

facebook.com/Rise.Incorporated



Photos: Brian Tanning and Alex Samek

RISE'ING STARS

Lori Mayo

Lori Mayo is a light to those who know her, keeping people on their toes with her signature wit, sly looks and unmatched humor.

Lori tirelessly works to develop skills needed for independent employment. This includes being part of a supported employment team at Cummins.

An original employee when the mailroom opened in 2018, she has become a natural leader who works independently to notify Cummins employees about package arrivals, schedules pickups, ensures mail is delivered and more.

She has strong customer service skills which are sure to serve her well in her community employment search.



Michael Sack

Michael Sack is a talented writer who elevates accessibility concerns in our community. He began with a blog covering accessibility needs in sports venues, which caught the attention of the Minnesota Twins and Star Tribune. During the past election cycle, he volunteered with his state representative, serving as a sounding board and advocate for people who have disabilities. He was also hired as a consultant on a Minneapolis mayoral campaign.

Michael speaks to and for the people Rise serves with a unique perspective and a brilliant, well-researched writing style. His determination to make a difference has him poised to be a major influencer and contributor on disability acceptance and perspectives in Minnesota's future.





Jobyna Curtis

Jobyna Curtis has a knack for developing supportive relationships. She is consistently recognized as an outstanding team member at Catholic Eldercare where she works as a resident companion. Her job allows her to build genuine connections with residents, managers and teammates.

Curtis works to navigate and overcome mental health challenges. Her self-awareness and willingness to lean on the community supports she's built allow Jobyna to confidently advocate for herself and achieve her goals.

Mark Brown

Mark has successfully transitioned from DTH services to full-time community employment at Home Depot. He has held many positions since he began working there in 2013, including cart attendant, sales associate, and online order fulfillment, which allowed him to work increased hours during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mark spends his free time volunteering in the Spring Lake Park School District, where he works with elementary-aged students who have disabilities and other challenges.



Ashley Wright

Over the course of a year Ashley Wright moved from a group home setting to her own home.

Her determination allowed her to overcome obstacles to reach important milestones, including gaining full custody of her son, graduating from a treatment program to become a certified peer recovery specialist in Central Minnesota, joining a faith community, and building a support network to lean on when necessary - all while working!

Ashley is a model of purpose and dedication as she has continued to reach personal milestones and set even bigger goals.



EXEMPLARY AWARDS

THE TOLLEFSON AWARD



Nancy Hoff

In celebration of our 50th Anniversary, we introduced “The Tollefson Award” named after our founder, Chester Tollefson and his family. This honor recognizes those with a longstanding dedication and commitment to Rise’s mission.

Our first recipient was Nancy Hoff who has been supporting the people we serve since 1983. Her tireless community outreach touting the benefits of working with Rise has resulted in thousands of job opportunities. She has knack for telling Rise’s story, which motivates our customers to want to do more. We are grateful for her service to our mission these past 40 years.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

DEPARTING BOARD MEMBERS



Sherry Robinson

Sherry Robinson brought valuable knowledge and advice to our board. As Vice President of Human Resources at nVent she advised Rise on administrative decisions and initiatives. Her tenure ended in 2020, but we were unable to thank her for her service due the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate your guidance, Sherry.



Jon Grunewald

Jon Grunewald succeeded his father, Jack Grunewald, who retired following a long board tenure. We appreciate his wise counsel, along with his family's continued support and commitment to Rise. Thank you, Jon for your leadership.



Manfred Tatzmann

An 8-year Board member including as vice chair, Manfred Tatzmann considers his work advocating for people who have disabilities a personal mission. He spent his career in the disability services field before joining the Rise Board. Manfred is an advocate for all people. We are thankful for his dedication to Rise.

CHAMPIONS OF THE MISSION



Lisa Carlson

Lisa Carlson has built a career supporting people who have disabilities. A Rise team member since 2014, Lisa currently works at the Lee Carlson Center/Bridgeview Mental Health Drop-in Center. She brings a positive, upbeat approach to her work each day while advocating for the people she serves. She also assists with the Self-Advocacy Council, presents at new employee onboarding, and works with the Anoka County Mental Health team.



Ashley Worthen-Galuska

Going above and beyond comes naturally to Ashley Worthen-Galuska. A passion to support rural Minnesotans who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing brought her to Rise three years ago. Her work to connect people she serves at the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) with employment opportunities paid off in big ways in 2021 when Ashley supported five people starting new jobs. Ashley is also a member of the MEC leadership team steering committee.



Krista Heiple

Krista Heiple has worn many hats during her decade working at Rise. She currently is a lead Direct Support Professional (DSP) at Rise Cottage Grove where she supports a crew at Bix Produce. Krista is known as a strong, fun and dependable job coach who represents Rise with integrity as she advocates for her crew on the job site each day.

IN MEMORIAM

Elaine Voss

We remember our dear friend, supporter, board member and former Deputy Minnesota Secretary of State Elaine Voss, who passed away December 21, 2019.

Voss served a term as president during her nearly 20 years on the Rise Board, leading Rise through challenging times of growth. She was a mentor and friend to many, and as we gather in person for the first time since her death, we celebrate her legacy at Rise and in Minnesota.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

EMPLOYERS OF THE YEAR



Catholic Eldercare

A mission to help senior citizens live with dignity is also reflected in Catholic Eldercare's staff relationships. In the year since we began a partnership together, staff and management have gone above and beyond to support our Rise teams, allowing for flexible time to work through challenges and eventually thrive. They consistently provide positive strengths-based feedback to help workers grow.



Culver's - Woodbury

The Woodbury Culver's has partnered with Rise (first as ESR) since opening in 2016. They've supported and hired nearly a dozen workers during that time. General Manager Aaron Sundgaard spends time coaching employees, learning their strengths, and communicating expectations. He also makes work fun, flexible and person-centered. When the pandemic hit, Culver's held positions open for more than a year until people we serve could return to work. Culver's and Sundgaard have a deep understanding of the role employment plays in developing community connections which contribute to a high quality of life.



Medart

Medart believes all people can succeed, and is willing to provide an opportunity to those looking to accomplish career goals. Our relationship began five years ago with the hiring of two order-fulfillment positions. Since then, their commitment has doubled. Because the warehouse management team places a high value on success, they are willing to spend extra time developing employees. We thank them for opening their doors to Rise.



Ruan / Bobcat

Rise's work with Ruan / Bobcat has expanded significantly since 2018. Most recently when warehouse manager Todd Peterson took on a new work group in danger of losing their jobs due to the closure of another employer's site. Rise now has 12 people working on two supported employment teams managing kit parts at Ruan's Otsego, Minn. Bobcat facility.

Ruan and Bobcat commit to Rise outside of the warehouse too. In partnership with Cummins, they contribute to our Thanksgiving meal drive, which sustains and supports people with food, gift cards and other items during the busy holiday season.

● **DISABILITY ADVOCATES** ●



Sen. Jim Abeler & Sen. John Hoffman

In 2021, Rise recognized Senators Jim Abeler (District 35) and John Hoffman (District 36) for their hard work and dedication on behalf of people we serve throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

They worked tirelessly together, ensuring disability providers like Rise could reopen to provide people with work and life enrichment opportunities and support. Both sought input and listened to our public policy concerns related to funding and programs. That support led to the passage of provider retention grants and also to a second round of public health grants during the pandemic, which helped sustain programs at Rise during an especially challenging time.

Senators Abeler's and Hoffman's collaboration is an example of the lasting impact our elected officials have in our communities each day. We are grateful for their tremendous work.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Premier Sponsor

& RECIPIENT OF THE 2021 GOLDEN PARTNER AWARD



To recognize a valued and decades-long partnership, in 2021 we named nVent the recipient of our new Golden Partner Award, created to highlight outstanding long-time Rise relationships.

Rise and nVent have supported people we serve together for much of our history. Nearly 70 Rise team members go to work at nVent each day through a partnership that goes beyond nVent's Anoka location and into the community.

As one of our most valued advocates, nVent employees help us connect with new businesses while sharing their own Rise success stories. We have also benefitted from the guidance of several nVent employees who have served on our board of directors through the years.

We thank nVent for their continued partnership and support and look forward to the future!

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North Central Bus & Equipment | Ruan / Bobcat | Voya Services Company | Winthrop & Weinstine



The Anniversary Celebration Continues!

Learn more about the people at Rise and the work they do in our
50 Stories for 50 Years story project!



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