

RISE REPORTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2024 | VOL. 48, NO. 02



IN THIS ISSUE:

Celebrating Community-Based Employment | 35 Years at McDonald's
Technology Making a Difference | Finding Work Success | Celebrating our Teams

RISE REPORTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2024 | VOL. 48, NO. 2

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings,

I hope you have had a wonderful summer. We were busy at Rise, are still enjoying fun outings and events in our communities, along with many new work opportunities for the people we serve.

We have also been planning for a big change that affects me personally. As you may know, in May I announced that after 45 years, I will be retiring from Rise. I have learned in life that some people don't have the opportunity to enjoy a robust retirement, and I really want to enjoy that phase of life. I have retirement goals that will hopefully allow me more time to travel, work in my gardens, and volunteer in the community. My family is also very important to me, and I'll be able to spend more time supporting them in my retirement. I am working with the Board to determine my final day

at Rise, which will likely be by the end of the year after a new leader is in place.

Our Board of Directors and I have been planning for a smooth transition for quite some time. They have engaged a search firm to assist in the process of recruiting a new President and CEO. We have advanced our programs and services in exciting ways these past few years. I am confident that this work, along with improvements to our administrative structure and processes, will allow a new leader to join us at a time that is ripe for developing future organizational strategies.

Rise is an important part of my life, and I feel so fortunate to have worked closely with the exceptional people we serve, their families, our incredibly talented team members, and community supporters. In many ways, I grew up at Rise at the same time Rise was "growing up", and I treasure that experience.

We have created a special page on rise.org with information about the search for a new President and CEO. I plan to stay involved with Rise in the future, cheering the organization on as a valued supporter.

Enjoy the change in seasons as we welcome fall,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Mendenhall". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rise President and CEO



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STAFF

- Lynn Noren**
President and CEO
- Kristin Hangebrauck**
Chair, Rise Board of Directors
- Noel McCormick**
Vice President of Advancement
- Kelly Bartnick**
Communications Manager; Editor

COVER PHOTO

Cindy Scott, who we support through our sensory programs at Rise, was one of the final people to wrap up center-based work in Spring Lake Park earlier this year. Cindy began at Rise in July 1991. She transitioned to our new sensory program day services group in Coon Rapids when our production facility closed in March.

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.

Executive Search Update

The Rise Board of Directors has partnered with Minneapolis-based executive recruitment firm Cohen Taylor in a nationwide search to fill our President and CEO position.

The position was posted in July, 2024.

Lynn Noren will be retiring by the end of the year, but plans to stay on until the Board hires a replacement.

The position description and process updates are posted at:

rise.org/ceo-transition/



SAYING GOODBYE

Eleanor Thomas, a site supervisor at Cummins, celebrates retirement.

Cummins site supervisor Eleanor Thomas retired in mid-May. She is pictured above (center) with Cummins team members who recognized her career milestone.

After seven years at Rise, direct support professional Eleanor Thomas retired from Rise in mid-May. She has supervised an employment team at Cummins in Fridley since 2020. Cummins and Rise teamed up to recognize her significant contributions and celebrate her retirement. We caught up with her to talk about her job and her plans for the future:

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO ABOUT RETIREMENT?

Eleanor: “Staying in my pajamas all day [laugh]. Just kidding! I’ll enjoy being home and being with my husband. We have been waiting for my retirement and plan to travel to Florida and visit family during the winter. We are looking forward to spending some time together.”

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE RISE AND WHAT KEPT YOU COMING TO WORK EVERY DAY?

Eleanor: “What kept me is the people. Management here listens to you, and I was heard. I didn’t always like what they had to say, and sometimes they weren’t always happy with me, but I was needed.”

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO MISS ABOUT COMING TO WORK EVERY DAY?

Eleanor: “I’m going to miss the people. My group and I have fun. When they have problems, they come to me and I help solve them, on top of everything else being a supervisor requires. I have fun with them, and we enjoy each other. I’m going to miss the family.”

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE CONSIDERING THIS TYPE OF WORK?

Eleanor: “I would say do it. The first thing you need to do is treat people like they are your family. Think of how you would like your family to be treated and just treat them that way. That’s when you realize you have a great job.”

FAVORITE INSPIRING QUOTE:

Eleanor: “Sometimes when we are generous in small, barely detectable ways it can change someone else’s life forever.” -Margaret Cho



photo: Delaney Bostrom

Top photo: Our Rise leadership team, people we support, and our founder Chester Tollefson (center) cut the ribbon to officially open our new administrative office in Fridley in May.

Bottom photos: (left) Lynn Noren and Tanner Adams introduce Minnesota Senator Jim Abeler during the Disability Services Day rally at the Capitol in St. Paul in March. (right) Board Member Kelly Steffens (2nd from left) and Rise supporters sample Lift Bridge brewery flights during a fundraising event held in June in New Richmond, Wis.



photo: Tom Brinker

INDEPENDENT EMPLOYMENT FOCUS

Jafar Lee makes moves from a supported employment team to a new, independent job.



Jafar Lee is always moving at work. That's just one of the good things about his job as a dining room attendant at Crestview Assisted Living and Memory Care in Columbia Heights. When you ask him about the other good things, one stands out over the others. "They're nice to me," Jafar said as his signature smile spread across his face.

He found Crestview through a job tryout a year ago and knew almost instantly that he wanted

to work there. But the onboarding process wasn't fast. It took more than six months before Jafar was settled into the job due to Covid-19 quarantines at the facility.

"He's a good worker. He comes in with a smile on his face ready to work. He's a great person," said Chef Supervisor Chris Jones.

The job provides independent work with occasional support from a Rise employment coach. "I do coffee for the people and cleaning like mopping the floors,"

Jafar said. "People want chocolate or white milk or coffee. It's good. They're happy for me, and I enjoy making coffee."

His position isn't full-time yet, so Jafar divides his time between a Rise supported employment team at a local manufacturing facility and the assisted living center. He works three days each week in manufacturing and the other two days at Crestview. The dining room work fits his personality better. He enjoys the movement it allows him throughout the building and because the job is a competitive position, he also is happy with the higher wage.

Jafar is close with his family and recently used some of his hard-earned wages to travel with them on a Jamaican cruise. He had such a good time that he is already planning another cruise in the new year. ▼

Growing with Rise

Join us!

Thursday, November 7, 2024

5:00 – 8:30 p.m.

at the Minneapolis
Marriott Northwest

AUCTION

Come ready to bid on exciting prizes during our live auction! We will also host an online auction starting Friday, November 1st at Noon CDT through Friday, November 8th at Noon. Head to rise.org/event/growingwithrise for more information and preview of items.

EMCEE

Nancy Lyons, CEO and President of Clockwork

ATTIRE

From business casual to formal or in-between, dress to your comfort level.

SCHEDULE

5:00 p.m. Social hour, games, and cash bar
6:45 p.m. Dinner, program, and auction
8:15 p.m. Closing remarks

MENU

- Starter** Tender kale Caesar salad with parmesan cheese and roasted tomatoes, served with creamy Caesar and ranch dressings
- Entree** Herb roasted chicken with wild mushroom ragout, sauteed spinach, mashed potatoes, and roasted carrots (GF)
- Vegetarian** Rice bowl with steamed brown rice, braised chickpeas & bell pepper ragù, avocado, toasted cashews, and greens
- Dessert** Strawberry shortcake with Chantilly cream or triple chocolate layer cake topped with chocolate sauce (*alternating*)



After 45 years of service to Rise, including more than 10 years as president and CEO, Lynn Noren has announced her retirement by the end of 2024. Her work and advocacy has transformed the lives of people with disabilities, leaving an enduring impact in our communities.

We look forward to celebrating Lynn alongside friends and supporters at our gala!



R.S.V.P. By October 18th



To purchase tickets or a table, visit:
rise.org/event/growingwithrise



TECHNOLOGY AND INDEPENDENCE

With the help of cutting-edge technology, Janet Krear is finding her voice and redefining her future.



Janet Krear (left) explores different ways to interact with her assistive technology with assistance from Paul Sanft (right) at the PACER Center in Minneapolis.

Technology is becoming an increasingly important part of Janet Krear's life. For the first time, at age 50, she is using assistive devices to communicate with others. This change comes with a steep learning curve but also has the potential for even greater rewards.

"This is very different, and I'm not sure we have the full picture yet," said Diane Krear, Janet's mother.

Diane accompanied Janet and her home care attendant on a recent trip from Wisconsin to the PACER Center in Minneapolis to

explore and fine-tune the technology available to Janet. It was their second visit to PACER's technology center and lending library, where Janet has been exploring technology that will enable her to communicate more freely with the people she interacts with every day.



“Janet, we’re going to try to get you to open up your iPad by just looking at it,” said Rise Employment Exploration Specialist Shylo Olson.

During their first trip, they set up a new iPad with apps designed to assist with speech. There are many ways to activate these apps, including using the iPad’s camera to track body motions that trigger software with preprogrammed words, allowing for more in-depth communication.

Janet is also experimenting with video calling functions. This year she communicated with family and friends via FaceTime for the first time. However, some fine-tuning and experimentation are still needed for everything to work smoothly.

“Today we want to get the head tracking right for you, Janet, and then work on editing in the software,” said PACER Center Technology Director Paul Sanft.

“Janet, you have a lot of options—raise your eyebrows, open your mouth, smile, stick out your tongue, blink...” Olson said as she continued reading options from an on-screen menu.

Rise Employment Exploration Specialist Shylo Olson (left) talks through options and equipment with Janet Krear (center) and Paul Sanft (right).

TECHNOLOGY TRYOUT

Assistive technology can range from simple tools to highly sophisticated electronic devices. The goal of this technology is to set people up for success at home, in their communities, at school, and at work.

“Very rarely is it the same from person to person. It’s not until you get to try the different things that you know what works best,” Sanft said.

PACER Center doesn’t sell technology, but it stocks more than 1,700 items. The staff there consult on assistive devices and manage a lending library that allows people to try out one or several devices before purchasing them. The ultimate goal is to find ways to learn, live independently, and feel included.

Diane Krear says she’s noticed

a change since Janet began using her iPad. “She loves it. A lot of it is that she’s being treated as an adult. That’s a big thing because most people don’t treat her that way even though she’s 50 years old,” Krear said.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Janet left PACER with a new switcher button that will allow her to activate her iPad without touching the screen. Next steps may include opportunities to text family and friends and increased Wi-Fi, which would keep Janet connected to her world 24/7.

All of these changes may mean that Janet could land her first job sometime soon, an idea that makes Janet flash an approving smile.

“Once she gets [the technology] down and learns everything, she can go anywhere,” Diane Krear said. ▼





FINANCIAL GIFT HONORS FAMILY MEMBER

Corrine Smith, 103, Vero Beach, Fla. passed away in March, 2023. Rise supported her daughter, Cosette, for many years before her death in 2015. Corinne was extremely supportive and generous throughout the years. Her \$920,000 estate bequest honoring Cosette is among the largest financial gifts we have ever received.

“The funds were directed to our general operations,” said Vice President of Advancement Noel McCormick. “We are so grateful Corrine trusted us to be good stewards and use the donation as needed. It allowed us to offset financial hardships related to the Covid-19 Pandemic while continuing to focus on growth, change and program innovations.” ▼



Corrine Smith

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS THIS PAST YEAR

Event sponsors help us raise money that directly benefits people we support. Sponsorships cover event costs, so we can use funds raised to support Rise programs or assist people through special initiatives like our Advancing Lives Fund. The special fund grants up to \$500 for essential items not covered by any other funding sources. These items allow people to reach their personal and professional goals so they can live great lives.



AmCon | Bix Produce | Lynn Noren
Medica | Mintahoe Catering & Events
Northeast Bank | Sheila Minske & Erin Peterson



nvent

SPONSORSHIP SPOTLIGHT & HIGHLIGHTS



Our Relationship with nVent goes back more than 45 years which is almost as long as we have been supporting people with disabilities.

We currently have about 70 people working at nVent HOFFMAN in Anoka. Many work in the small parts area on the factory floor.

Employees at nVent have spent countless hours volunteering with Rise throughout the years.

Financial support from nVent goes beyond putting people to work. The company has also generously sponsored our fundraising gala and other featured Rise events, which raise money and awareness for our support services.





1



2



4



3

Photos: (1) Lida Stoner and a volunteer sort shoes at the New Brighton Community Center donated by a local charity. They'll be sold through the Shoes for Hunger program.

(2) A large group of staff and people we support line up before marching in the Spring Lake Tower Days Parade in June.

(3) Board members Kristin Hangebrauck (Chair) and Cliff Rhoten (Vice Chair) check out our new St. Louis Park life enrichment program during an open house.

(4) Patrick Pomerleau enjoys a Lunch with Llamas event held in July at the Emma B. Howe Northtown YMCA in Coon Rapids.

(5) Jamie Rushton and Board member Susan Langfeldt walk in the Fun Fest Parade held in July in New Richmond.



5



VOLUNTEER CORNER

Our volunteers have been busy these past few months! A special thanks to Medtronic volunteers who came from as far as Ireland and included us in their team's day of service earlier this spring as they spruced up areas in and around Coon Rapids. Additionally, our partner, nVent assembled more than a hundred personal care kits that we used during a life enrichment learning activity. ▼



INTO OUR COMMUNITIES

Celebrating a center-based work milestone.

We officially ended center-based employment in March. This marked a significant change, which also eliminated special minimum wage work (jobs allowed by the government to pay less than minimum wage) at Rise.

It took more than four years of planning to create new day sup-

port initiatives and build business relationships in order for the change to happen.

Many of those who worked at one of our production locations in Spring Lake Park, Oakdale and New Richmond have found community-based jobs paying minimum wage or higher. Others

have transitioned into retirement, opting to participate in life enrichment programming instead of work.

We took some photos (below and opposite page) during our final days to mark the historic change. ▼



Photos: (1) Chue Chang (left) and Taiye Agboola (right) work to address mailing envelopes.

(2) Celebration luncheon.

(3) Angela Peters finishes up a project.

(4) Felicia Robinson sorts pieces in her final project.

(5) Our staff and executive team helping out.

(6) Noel McCormick, VP of Advancement.

(7) Lynn Noren and Michele Morris, Dir. of Physical Asset Mgmt.

(8) Denise Thul, VP of Human Resources.

(9) Nancy Hoff, Sales.

(10) Tim Dickie, Chief Program Officer, Noel McCormick and Nancy Hoff.



STILLWATER'S SECRET INGREDIENT

Alice Kane celebrates 35 years at McDonald's.



Alice Kane knows the McDonald's menu better than just about anyone. She will enthusiastically tell you about her favorite crispy chicken sandwich currently available to customers and is quick to list off all the favorite foods that have come and gone over the past three decades.

She knows the menu so well because she serves the food during the busy lunch rushes at McDonald's located near the St. Croix Valley Recreation Center in Stillwater four days each week. It is a job she has been doing for 35 years.

"People always ask me, 'Hey, do you work with Alice?' You get that question a lot. She's one of the most famous people in Stillwater!" said owner Andy Duval.





Photos: (Opposite page top): Alice takes orders at the McDonald's Counter. (Opposite page bottom): The McDonald's team congratulated Alice with notes for her anniversary. (Left): Andy Duval and Alice pose for a photo before her shift begins.

Alice started working at the original Stillwater McDonald's in 1989 as a cleaner. One of her managers saw potential and trained her to do much more. Now she can handle just about any job at the busy restaurant, but sticks to taking orders at the kiosk, running food, and working both drive-thru windows.

"I like being sociable," Alice said. "And I like being friendly with the customers."

In May, Duval and his team hosted a special anniversary party in Alice's honor. "This is an opportunity for us to thank Alice for 35 amazing years," he said. "Thank God you're here. How would we run without Alice? We really wouldn't. We'd close down shop. We admire her consistency, her constant hard work. She's a joy for all the workers and the customers."

And she's a role model for her coworkers. Several years ago, a manager encouraged her to be a certified trainer. She has trained most of her coworkers on the day-to-day tasks in the restaurant. Some of the people she trained are now store managers and district managers.

Alice checks in with her Rise job coach, Stacy Egeness, each week. They talk about work, what's going on in her life, and how her favorite teams, the Minnesota Twins and Vikings, are doing each season. "Alice always has a great perspective on things, and I think that's what makes her a good worker, too, because she's really kind, very sweet, and always wants to help out," Egeness said.

After so many successful years, Alice has no plans to quit working. She hopes to work at least another ten more years.

"My goal is to make it to 47 years," she said. "Hopefully I can physically do it." ▼

2023



ANNUAL REPORT

No one should feel limited by their situation

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded on the belief that everyone deserves opportunities to achieve meaningful growth and live their best life. Our programs in Minnesota and Wisconsin take a whole-person approach, pushing the boundaries of what's possible through supportive access to employment, housing, and life-enrichment services.

Mission

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

Vision

We envision a progressive, supportive, and collaborative environment that fosters meaningful growth and provides opportunities to live a life filled with purpose.

2023 Board of Directors

Chair • Kathy Klang, Minneapolis
Vice Chair • Kristin Hangebrauck, St. Louis Park
Treasurer • Andrea Murphy, Champlin
Secretary • Rachael Smith, Champlin
Lauri Hopkins, Lino Lakes
Anne Holoch, Corcoran
Krishnakumar Iyer, St. Paul
Susan Langfeldt, Deer Park, Wis.
Jim Miley, Inver Grove Heights
Sheila Minske, Minneapolis
Dan Newman, Aitkin
Scott Price, Andover
Cliff Rhoten, White Bear Lake
Kelly Steffens, Prior Lake



We supported 2658 people in 2023

1735



Employment

666



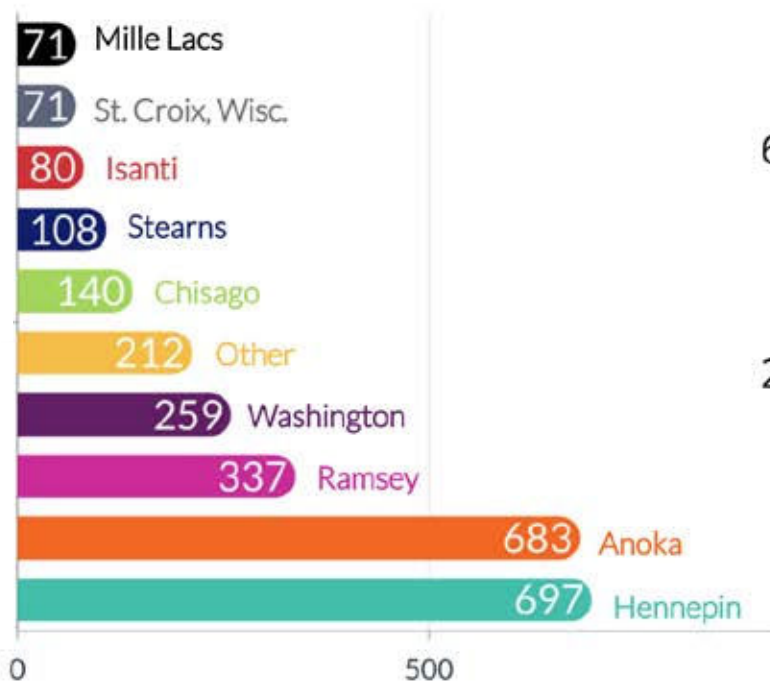
Life Enrichment

257

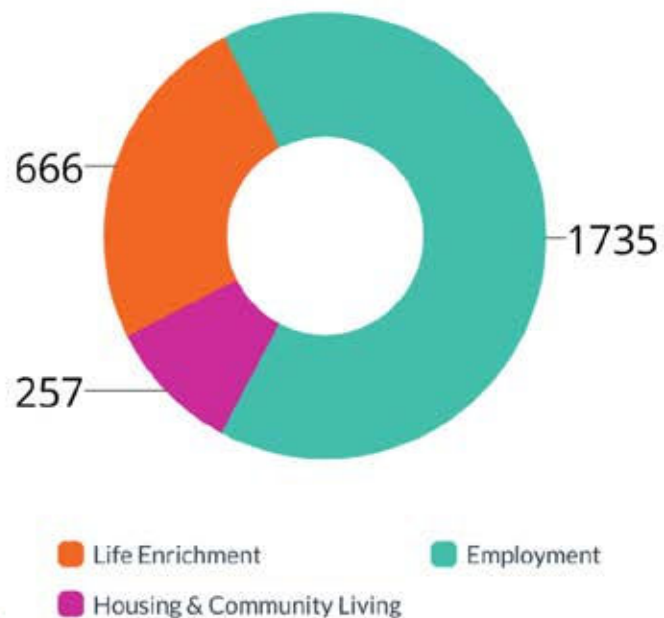


Housing & Community Living

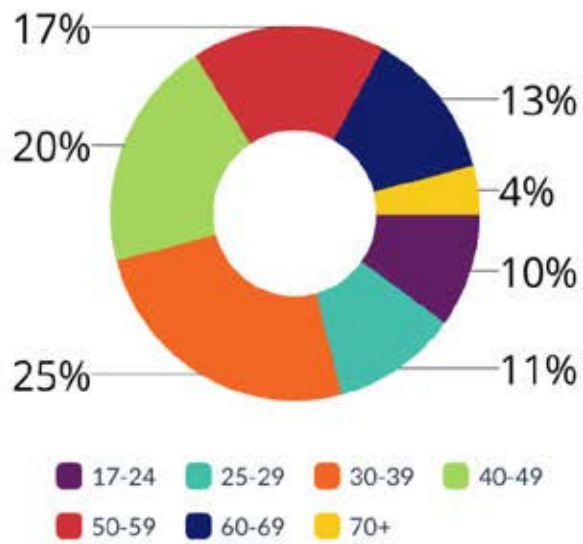
County of Residence



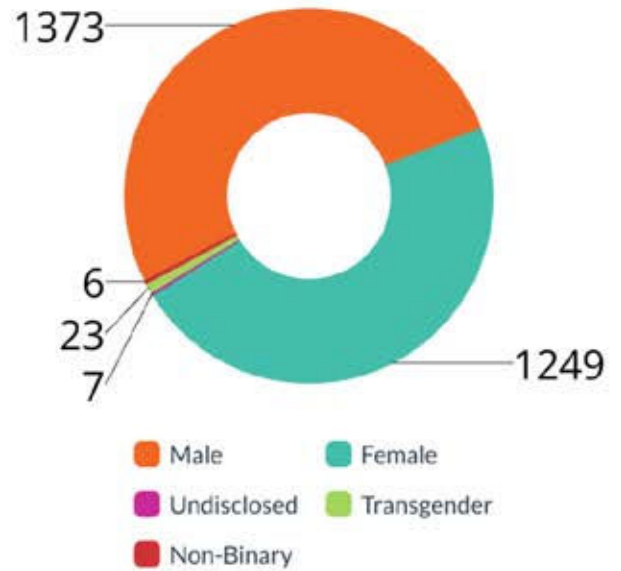
Enrollment by Service Line



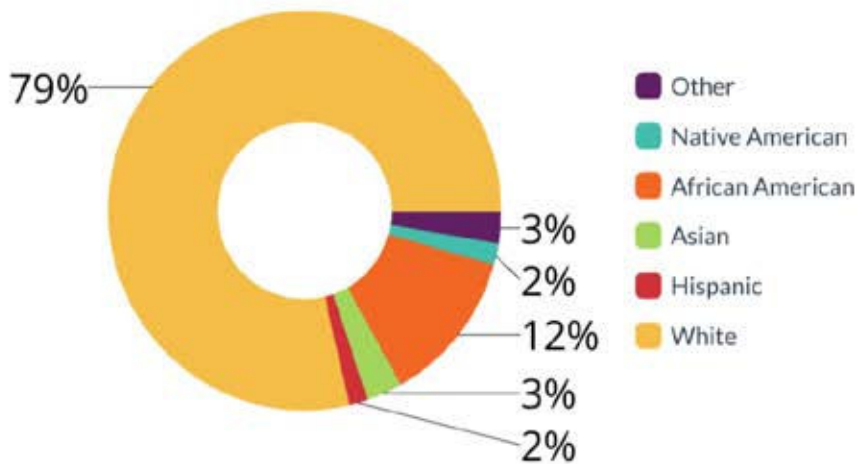
Age



Gender



Race





Employment

323

Competitive Job
Placements

Work performed in an
integrated setting at
minimum wage or
higher.

\$15.72

Average Wage

Wages vary by
region/team from
\$14.88/hour to
\$17.66/hour.

23.41

Average Weekly
Hours Worked

Hours vary by
region/team from
17.60 to 33.60.

Decrease of
195 to 110*
people served through
center-based employment
in 2023

**reflects a strategic goal to
eliminate center-based employment
by April 2024*

Satisfaction



"I like working hard, making money, and
socializing. I like everything about Rise. Rise
is the best!"

-Person Served

"They allow my daughter to feel right at
home. Rise is the perfect fit. The team is
outstanding."

-Parent

*Survey made up of 369 responses, including people we serve, family
members/guardians, referral sources, residential support teams, and
business partners*

Income Statement

INCOME

PROGRAM SERVICE FEES.....	\$15,786,000
PRODUCTION AND LABOR	
SALES TO PUBLIC	\$4,181,000
GRANTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS	\$3,538,000
TRANSPORTATION	\$5,431,000
DONATIONS/SPECIAL EVENTS.....	\$1,140,000
OTHER, INCLUDING	
UNREALIZED INVESTMENT GAINS	\$1,994,000
TOTAL INCOME.....	\$32,070,000

EXPENSES

DAY TRAINING &	
HABILITATION PROGRAMS	\$10,566,198
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION &	
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS.....	\$11,425,000
PRODUCTION.....	\$769,000
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL.....	\$4,228,000
TRANSPORTATION	\$2,642,000
LIFE ENRICHMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS.....	\$2,042,000
HOUSING & INDEPENDENT	
LIVING PROGRAMS.....	\$611,000
ADVANCEMENT.....	\$375,802
TOTAL EXPENSES.....	\$32,659,000

OTHER INCOME

COVID 19 RELIEF FUNDING	\$276,000
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ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS.....	\$23,260,000
NET LAND, BUILDING & EQUIPMENT	\$7,070,000
OTHER ASSETS.....	\$1,915,000
TOTAL ASSETS.....	\$32,245,000

LIABILITIES

CURRENT LIABILITIES.....	\$2,558,000
LONG-TERM DEBT	\$1,473,000
OTHER LIABILITIES.....	\$841,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$4,872,000

NET ASSETS

NET ASSETS - UNRESTRICTED	\$26,773,000
NET ASSETS - RESTRICTED	\$600,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS.....	\$27,373,000

Strategic Leadership Team

LYNN NOREN • President and CEO | TIM DICKIE • Chief Program Officer | TOM HAGLUND • Chief Financial Officer
NOEL MCCORMICK • VP of Advancement | DENISE THUL • VP of Human Resources

JUDY ANDERSEN,
Director of Community Programs

DAN MEYERS,
Director of Vocational Evaluation & Transition

JODI BLUME,
Senior Director of Community Integration
& Life Enrichment Programs

MICHELE MORRIS, Director of Physical Asset Mgmt.

JESSI DUVALL,
Director of CBTE & Sensory Programs

RYAN NELSON, Director of Transportation

MIKE HARPER,
Senior Director of Programs & Services,
Central Minnesota

ROBERT REEDY, Senior Director of Vocational Services

BECKY ROTHER, Director of Quality Assurance

KEITH HOVLAND,
Senior Director of CBTE & Supported Employment Teams

JAMIE SMITH,
Director of Information Technology

JOHN WATTERS,
Program Director, Washington County & Western Wisconsin



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TWIN CITIES, MN

Growing with Rise



Join us!

Thursday, November 7, 2024

5:00 - 8:30 p.m.

at the Minneapolis
Marriott Northwest

AUCTION

Come ready to bid on exciting prizes during our live auction! We will also host an online auction starting Friday, November 1st at Noon CDT through Friday, November 8th at Noon. Head to rise.org/event/growingwithrise for more information and preview of items.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

Go online to rise.org/events to purchase.

www.rise.org | Facebook: Rise, Incorporated | Instagram: @rise.mn | TikTok: @rise.mn

Shop: printstore.rise.org | Mailing Changes send to: Tom Brinker • tbrinker@rise.org